



**For the Patient: Alemtuzumab IV injection**  
Other names: MABCAMPATH®, CAMPATH®

**BC Cancer Agency**

- Alemtuzumab (uh-lem-TOOZ-uh-mab) is a drug that is used to treat many types of cancers. It is a monoclonal antibody, a type of protein designed to target and kill cancer cells. It is a clear liquid that is injected into a vein.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to alemtuzumab or other monoclonal antibodies such as rituximab before taking alemtuzumab.
- A **blood test** may be taken weekly before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- Some immunizations (**flu shots and vaccines**) may be less effective during or within 1 year after alemtuzumab treatment. Some immunizations should not be used during or within 1 year after alemtuzumab treatment. Talk to your doctor before receiving any immunizations.
- Other drugs may **interact** with alemtuzumab. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of alemtuzumab.
- It is not known if alemtuzumab causes **sterility** in men or **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with alemtuzumab.
- Alemtuzumab may damage sperm. It is not known if alemtuzumab may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with alemtuzumab, and for six months after your last treatment. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment, and for at least three months after your last treatment.
- **Tell** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with alemtuzumab before you receive any treatment from them.

Changes in blood counts

Alemtuzumab may cause changes in your blood counts for an extended period of time. Your doctor will be following these changes carefully by performing blood tests. Adjustment of your treatment may be needed in certain circumstances.

BLOOD COUNTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Normal white blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. <b>When they are low, you are at greater risk of having an infection.</b></p>	<p>To help prevent infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You will be given an antibiotic and an antiviral medication to take while you are receiving alemtuzumab and for at least 2 months after your treatment with alemtuzumab. Be sure you understand the instructions.</li> <li>• Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom.</li> <li>• Avoid crowds and people who are sick.</li> <li>• Call your doctor <b>immediately</b> at the first sign of an infection such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer), shaking chills; cough, severe sore throat, productive cough (coughing up thick or green sputum); cloudy or foul smelling urine; painful, tender, or swollen red skin wounds or sores.</li> </ul>
<p>Normal platelets help your blood to clot normally after an injury (e.g., cut). <b>When the platelet count is low you may be more likely to bruise or bleed.</b></p>	<p>To help prevent bleeding problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try not to bruise, cut, or burn yourself.</li> <li>• Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose.</li> <li>• Avoid constipation.</li> <li>• Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. Maintain good oral hygiene.</li> </ul> <p>Some medications such as ASA (e.g., ASPIRIN®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL®) may increase your risk of bleeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by your doctor (e.g., <b>ASA for your heart</b>).</li> <li>• For minor pain, try acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) first, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.</li> </ul>

BLOOD COUNTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Red blood cells carry oxygen throughout your body. Your red blood cells may decrease after your treatment. <b>You may feel more tired or short of breath than usual.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell your doctor if you are feeling light-headed, weak, or short of breath.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <i>Your Bank of Energy Savings: How People with Cancer Can Handle Fatigue</i>.*</li> </ul>

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>A <b>flu-like illness</b> is common shortly after your first treatment with alemtuzumab and with each increase in dose. <b>Fever and chills</b> frequently occur. Dizziness, nausea and vomiting may also occur. Rash, diarrhea, headache, sweating and shortness of breath are less common.</p> <p>These reactions should last no longer than 24 hours and usually disappear on their own. Reactions are less common with later treatments even if you have a reaction with the first treatment.</p>	<p>You will take acetaminophen (e.g., <b>TYLENOL®</b>) and diphenhydramine (e.g., <b>BENADRYL®</b>) before your treatment to help prevent a reaction. Tell your nurse or doctor <b>immediately</b> if you have a reaction during or after the treatment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may be given other drugs to treat the reaction.</li> <li>• Your alemtuzumab dose may be increased more slowly.</li> <li>• Fever and chills which occur more than 48 hours after treatment may be signs of an infection. They should be reported to your doctor <b>immediately</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b> may sometimes occur after your treatment and may last for 24 hours.</p>	<p>You may be given a prescription for antinausea drug(s) to take before your chemotherapy treatment and/or at home. <b>It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred</b>, so follow closely the directions for the antinausea prescription.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of liquids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <i>Food Choices to Help Control Nausea</i>.*</li> </ul>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Low blood pressure</b> may sometimes occur shortly after your first treatment with alemtuzumab and with each increase in dose. You may feel dizzy or light-headed when you first start taking alemtuzumab.</p> <p>Reactions are less common with later treatments even if you have a reaction with the first treatment.</p>	<p>Tell your nurse or doctor <b>immediately</b> if you feel dizzy or light-headed during the treatment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not drive a car if you feel dizzy or light-headed.</li> <li>• Rise slowly from a sitting or lying position.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Skin rashes</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>To help itching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can use calamine lotion.</li> <li>• If very irritating, call your doctor during office hours.</li> <li>• Otherwise make sure to mention it at your next visit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Diarrhea</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>To help diarrhea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of liquids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts.</li> <li>• Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Diarrhea During Chemotherapy</i>.* </li></ul>
<p><b>Headache</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours if needed, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day.</p>
<p><b>Muscle or joint pain</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) for mild to moderate pain. Avoid ASA (e.g., ASPIRIN®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL®) as they may increase your risk of bleeding. If you need to take these medications, tell your doctor at your next visit.</li> </ul> <p>Tell your doctor if the pain interferes with your activity.</p>
<p><b>Swelling</b> of hands, feet, or lower legs may rarely occur if your body retains extra fluid.</p>	<p>If swelling is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevate your feet when sitting.</li> <li>• Avoid tight clothing.</li> </ul>
<p>You may rarely have <b>trouble sleeping</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to your doctor if you continue to have trouble sleeping.</li> <li>• This will return to normal when you stop taking alemtuzumab.</li> </ul>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<b>Loss of appetite</b> may sometimes occur.	Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</i> .*
<b>Tiredness</b> and lack of energy may sometimes occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <i>Your Bank of Energy Savings: How People with Cancer Can Handle Fatigue</i>.*</li> </ul>
<b>Numbness or tingling of the fingers or toes</b> may sometimes occur. This will slowly return to normal once your treatments are over. This may take several months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be careful when handling items that are sharp, hot or cold.</li> <li>• Tell your doctor at your next visit, especially if you have trouble with buttons, writing, or picking up small objects.</li> </ul>
<b>Hair loss</b> does not occur with alemtuzumab.	

\*Please ask your chemotherapy nurse or pharmacist for a copy.

#### SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heart beat, face swelling, or breathing problems.
- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer), shaking chills; cough, severe sore throat, productive cough (coughing up thick or green sputum); cloudy or foul smelling urine; painful, tender, or swollen red skin wounds or sores.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin; extensive bruising.
- Signs of **heart problems** such as fast or uneven heartbeat, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing.

#### SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness, weakness, or feeling light-headed or short of breath.

#### CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Headache or pain not controlled with acetaminophen.
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- Numbness or tingling in feet or hands.
- Swelling of hands, feet, or lower legs.

