



Provincial Health Services Authority

For the Patient: Azacitidine injection

Other names: VIDAZA®

- **Azacitidine** (ay za site' i deen) is a drug that is used to treat some types of cancer. It is a cloudy liquid that is injected under the skin.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to azacitidine before receiving azacitidine.
- **Blood tests** may be taken regularly during treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of azacitidine.
- Azacitidine may affect **fertility** in men. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with azacitidine.
- Azacitidine may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with azacitidine and for 6 months after your treatment has ended. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breastfeed during treatment.
- **Tell** your doctor, dentist, and other health professionals that you are being treated with azacitidine before you receive any treatment from them.

Changes in blood counts

Azacitidine may cause temporary changes in your blood counts. Your doctor will be following these changes carefully by ordering regular 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. When they are low, you are at greater risk of having an infection.</p>	<p>To help prevent infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom. • Avoid crowds and people who are sick. • Call your healthcare team immediately at the first sign of an infection such as fever (over 38°C or 100°F by an oral thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.

BLOOD COUNTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Normal platelets help your blood to clot normally after an injury (e.g., cut). When the platelet count is low, you may be more likely to bruise or bleed.</p>	<p>To help prevent bleeding problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to bruise, cut, or burn yourself. • Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose. • Avoid constipation. • Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. <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"> • Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by your doctor (e.g., ASA for your heart). • For minor pain, try acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®).

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>Allergic reactions may rarely occur. Signs of an allergic reaction may include flushing, rash, itching, dizziness, swelling or breathing problems.</p>	<p>Tell your nurse if this happens while you are receiving azacitidine or contact your oncologist immediately if this happens after you leave the clinic.</p>
<p>Redness, swelling, itching, pain, or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed.</p>	<p>Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day.</p>
<p>Nausea and vomiting may occur after your treatment. If you are vomiting and it is not controlled, you can quickly become dehydrated</p>	<p>You will be given a prescription for antinausea drug(s) to take before your chemotherapy treatment and/or at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred, so follow directions closely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of fluids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Try the ideas in <i>Food Choices to Help Control Nausea</i>.* <p>Tell your healthcare team if nausea or vomiting continues or is not controlled with your antinausea drug(s).</p>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Skin rashes may sometimes occur.	If itching is very irritating, call your healthcare team. Otherwise, be sure to mention it at your next visit.
Fever may sometimes occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day. • If you have fever (over 38°C or 100°F by an oral thermometer) plus another sign of infection, call your healthcare team immediately. Other signs of infection include chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.
Minor bleeding, such as nosebleeds , may sometimes occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit up straight and tip your head slightly forward. Tilting your head back may cause blood to run down your throat. • Pinch your nostrils shut between your thumb and forefinger or apply firm pressure against the bleeding nostril for 10 full minutes. • After 10 minutes, check to see if your nose is still bleeding. If it is, hold it for 10 more minutes. • Stay quiet for a few hours and do not blow your nose for at least 12 hours after the bleeding has stopped. • Get emergency help if a nosebleed lasts longer than 20 minutes.
Diarrhea may sometimes occur. If you have diarrhea and it is not controlled, you can quickly become dehydrated.	<p>If diarrhea is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of fluids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <i>Food Ideas to Help Manage Diarrhea</i>.* <p>Tell your healthcare team if you have diarrhea for more than 24 hours.</p>
Constipation may sometimes occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise if you can. • Drink plenty of fluids. • Try the ideas in <i>Food Choices to Manage Constipation</i>.*
Headache may sometimes occur.	Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours if needed, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Muscle or joint pain may sometimes occur.	You may take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day for mild to moderate pain. Tell your healthcare team if the pain interferes with your activity.
Sugar control may be affected in patients with diabetes .	Check your blood sugar regularly if you have diabetes .
You may sometimes have trouble sleeping .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell your healthcare team if you continue to have trouble sleeping. • This will return to normal when you stop receiving azacitidine.
Loss of appetite and weight loss may sometimes occur.	Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</i> .*
Tiredness and lack of energy may sometimes occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. • Try the ideas in <i>Fatigue/Tiredness – Patient Handout</i>.*
Hair loss is rare with azacitidine. If you lose hair, it will grow back once you stop treatment with azacitidine. Colour and texture may change.	If hair loss is a problem, refer to <i>Resources for Hair Loss and Appearance Changes – Patient Handout</i> .*

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

CHECK WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin; extensive bruising.
- Signs of an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heart beat, face swelling, or breathing problems.
- Signs of **heart or lung problems** such as fast or uneven heartbeat, chest pain, chest pressure, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, swelling of feet or lower legs, or fainting.
- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer), shaking chills; 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; abdominal pain or tenderness.
- **Seizures** or loss of consciousness.

CHECK WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.

- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Signs of **kidney problems** such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs.

CHECK WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:

- Stomach pain or uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Headache or other pain not controlled with acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®).
- Bleeding gums, easy bruising, or minor bleeding.
- Redness, swelling, itching, pain, or sores where the needle was placed.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth, or throat.
- Skin rash or itching.
- Dizziness.
- Feelings of confusion or anxiety.
- For diabetics: uncontrolled blood sugars.

REPORT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM
