



## For the Patient: Cladribine

Other names: LEUSTATIN®

### BC Cancer Agency

- **Cladribine** (kla' dri been) is a drug that is used to treat many types of cancer. It is a clear liquid that is injected into a vein or under the skin.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to cladribine before receiving cladribine.
- A **blood test** may be taken before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- Other drugs may **interact** with cladribine. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start or stop taking any other drugs.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of cladribine.
- Cladribine may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with cladribine. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- **Tell** doctors, dentists, and other health professionals that you are being treated with cladribine before you receive any treatment from them.

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
<b>Pain or tenderness</b> may occur where the needle was placed.	Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day.
<b>Nausea</b> may sometimes occur with cladribine. Nausea is typically mild. Vomiting does not usually occur.	
<b>Headache</b> may sometimes occur.	Take acetaminophen (e.g., <b>TYLENOL®</b> ) every 4-6 hours if needed, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Fever</b> may commonly occur after treatment with cladribine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day.</li> <li>• Fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer) which occurs more than a few days after treatment may be a sign of an infection. Report this to your doctor <b>immediately</b>.</li> </ul>
<p>Your <b>white blood cells</b> may decrease 2 weeks after your treatment. They usually return to normal 5 weeks after your last treatment. White blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. When they are low, <b>you are at greater risk of having an infection</b>.</p>	<p>To help prevent infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.</li> </ul>
<p>Your <b>platelets</b> may decrease 7-14 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 2 weeks after your last treatment. Platelets help to make your blood clot when you hurt yourself. <b>You may bruise or bleed more easily than usual</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, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>A mild skin rash</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>If itching is very irritating, call your doctor. Otherwise, be sure to mention it at your next visit.</p>
<p><b>Loss of appetite</b> may sometimes occur and may persist after discontinuation of cladribine.</p>	<p>Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</i>.*</p>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<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 to Energy Savings: How People with Cancer Can Handle Fatigue</i>.*</li> </ul>
<b>Hair loss</b> does not occur with cladribine.	

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

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

- 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.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin; extensive bruising.
- Signs of a **blood clot** such as tenderness or hardness over a vein, calf swelling and tenderness, sudden onset of cough, chest pain, or shortness of breath.
- Signs of **heart problems** such as fast or uneven heartbeat.

### SEE YOUR DOCTOR 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.
- **Numbness or tingling** in feet or hands.
- Signs of **gout** such as joint pain.
- **Trouble walking.**
- Increased **sore throat or mouth** that makes it difficult to swallow comfortably.

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

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or constipation.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Pain or headache not controlled with acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®).
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- Skin rash or itching.
- Dizziness.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores where the needle was placed.

