



Provincial Health Services Authority

## For the Patient: Dacarbazine

Other names: DTIC

- **Dacarbazine** (da kar' ba zeen) is a drug that is used to treat many types of cancer. 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 temozolomide (TEMODAL®) or dacarbazine before taking dacarbazine.
- 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 such levodopa (PROLOPA®, SINEMET®) may **interact** with dacarbazine. Tell your doctor if you are taking these or any other drugs as you may need extra blood tests or your dose may need to be changed. 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 dacarbazine.
- Dacarbazine may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with dacarbazine. 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 dacarbazine 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
Dacarbazine <b>burns</b> if it leaks under the skin.	Tell your nurse or doctor <b>immediately</b> if you feel burning, stinging, or any other change while the drug is being given.
<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.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b> may occur after your treatment and may last for 1-12 hours.</p>	<p>You will be given a prescription for anti-nausea 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 directions closely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <a href="#">Practical Tips to Manage Nausea</a>.*</li> </ul>
<p>A <b>flu-like illness</b> may rarely occur shortly after your treatment. You may have fever, chills, muscle aches, and joint aches. Flu-like symptoms usually disappear on their own.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours if needed, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day.</li> <li>• More than 48 hours after treatment, if you have fever <b>plus</b> another sign of infection, call your doctor <b>immediately</b>. These other signs include 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Skin rashes</b> may rarely occur.</p>	<p>If itching is very irritating, call your doctor. Otherwise, be sure to mention it at your next visit.</p>
<p>Your <b>skin may sunburn</b> more easily than usual. Sunburn is more common right after treatment with dacarbazine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid direct sunlight and tanning salons.</li> <li>• Wear a hat, long sleeves, and long pants or skirt outside on sunny days.</li> <li>• Wear a sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB and has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Apply liberally, 30 minutes before exposure. Reapply every 2 hours and after swimming.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Refer to Your Medication Sun Sensitivity and Sunscreens* or the BC Health Guide for more information.</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">After sun exposure, if you have a severe sunburn or skin reaction such as itching, rash, or swelling, contact your doctor.</a></li> </ul>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Your <b>white blood cells</b> may decrease 10-14 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 1-3 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 12-18 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 1-3 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, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Loss of appetite</b> is common after treatment with dacarbazine.</p>	<p>Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</i>.*</p>
<p><b>Tiredness</b> and lack of energy may sometimes occur.</p>	<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>Fatigue/Tiredness – Patient Handout</i> OR <i>Your Bank to Energy Savings: Helping People with Cancer Handle Fatigue</i>.*</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hair loss is rare</b> with dacarbazine. If you lose hair, it will grow back once you stop treatment with dacarbazine. Colour and texture may change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush.</li> <li>• Care should be taken with use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes, and perms.</li> </ul>

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

