



Provincial Health Services Authority

For the Patient: Sunitinib

Other names: SUTENT®

- **Sunitinib** (soo-NI-ti-nib) is a drug that is used to treat different types of cancer. It is a capsule that you take by mouth.
- A **blood test** and **blood pressure measurement** may be taken. The dose of sunitinib may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- It is important to take sunitinib **exactly** as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions. You may be given more than one capsule in different strengths to make up your dose.
- You may take sunitinib **with food or on an empty stomach**.
- If you **miss a dose** of sunitinib, take it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose. If it is over 12 hours since your missed dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing time.
- If you **vomit** the dose of sunitinib within 30 minutes of taking it, you can repeat the dose. Let your doctor know as a medication to prevent nausea may be required for future doses.
- Other drugs such as ketoconazole and rifampin may **interact** with sunitinib. 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 taking any new drugs.
- **Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice** for the duration of your treatment with sunitinib, as these may interact with sunitinib.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of sunitinib.
- It is not known if sunitinib causes **sterility** in men or **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with sunitinib.
- Sunitinib may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with sunitinib. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- **Store** sunitinib capsules out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light, and moisture.

- **Tell** doctors or dentists that you are being treated with sunitinib 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
Nausea and vomiting may sometimes occur.	You may be given a prescription for anti-nausea drug(s) to take before your sunitinib dose. Take only anti-nausea medication prescribed by your oncologist. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred , so follow directions closely. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Try the ideas in Practical Tips to Manage Nausea.*
Indigestion/heartburn may sometimes occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid fatty, fried, or spicy foods. • Talk to your doctor about taking antacids.
Diarrhea may sometimes occur.	To help diarrhea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of liquids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in Food Choices to Help Manage Diarrhea.* • Your doctor or pharmacist may recommend a non-prescription diarrhea medication.
Constipation may sometimes occur.	To help constipation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise if you can. • Drink plenty of fluids (8 cups a day). • Try the ideas in Food Choices to Manage Constipation.*
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 plus another sign of infection, call your doctor immediately. Other signs of infection include chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Your white blood cells may decrease during your treatment. 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.
<p>Your platelets may decrease during your treatment. Platelets help to make your blood clot when you hurt yourself. You may bruise or bleed more easily than usual.</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. Maintain good oral hygiene. <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®) first, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.
<p>Tiredness and lack of energy are common.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. • Your doctor may do a blood test to make sure your thyroid gland is working properly. • Try the ideas in Fatigue/Tiredness – Patient Handout OR Your Bank to Energy Savings: Helping People with Cancer Handle Fatigue.*
<p>Sore mouth may sometimes occur during your treatment. Mouth sores may occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth, or in the throat. Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed, use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste. • Make a mouthwash with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda AND $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day. • Try the ideas in Food Ideas to Try with a Sore Mouth.*

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Taste alteration or loss of sensation of taste may sometimes occur.	Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Cope with Taste and Smell Changes</i> .*
Loss of appetite may sometimes occur.	Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</i> .*
Skin reactions such as rash, redness or dryness may sometimes occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moisturizing creams can help prevent or reduce skin dryness. • Wear loose-fitting cotton clothing. • If skin reactions persist or get worse, contact your doctor.
Hand-and-foot skin reaction may sometimes occur during sunitinib treatment. The palms of your hands and soles of your feet may tingle, become red, numb, painful, or swollen. Skin may also become dry or itchy. You may not be able to do your normal daily activities if blisters, severe pain, or ulcers occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid tight-fitting shoes or rubbing pressure to hands and feet, such as that caused by heavy activity. • Avoid tight-fitting jewellery. • Avoid shaving off blisters. • Clean hands and feet with lukewarm water and gently pat to dry; avoid hot water. • Apply a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 30. • Apply lanolin-containing creams (e.g., BAG BALM®, UDDERLY SMOOTH®) to hands and feet, liberally and often. • Tell your cancer doctor or your nurse at the next visit if you have any signs of hand-and-foot skin reaction as your dose may need to be changed.
Skin or urine may sometimes become yellowish in colour. Hair may sometimes lose its natural colour and become grey or white.	This will return to normal once you stop treatment with sunitinib.
Hair loss is rare with sunitinib. If you lose hair, it will back once you stop treatment with sunitinib.	<p>If hair loss is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Avoid use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes, and perms.
Sugar control may sometimes be affected in diabetic patients.	Check your blood sugar regularly if you are diabetic.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>High blood pressure may sometimes occur. This can happen very quickly after starting treatment.</p>	<p>Your blood pressure will be checked during your visits to your doctor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may be asked to check your blood pressure frequently between visits. • Your doctor may give you medication if your blood pressure is high. • Tell your doctor if you are already on blood pressure medication. Your doctor may have to adjust your dose.

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

STOP TAKING SUNITINIB AND 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; 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 or lung problems** such as fast or uneven heartbeat, chest pain, chest pressure, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, swelling of ankles, or fainting.

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

- Severe **skin reactions**.
- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness, weakness, or dizziness.
- **Pain** which is not controlled with acetaminophen (e.g., **TYLENOL®**).

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

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or constipation.
- For diabetic patients: uncontrolled blood sugars.
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding such as nosebleeding.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth, or throat.
- Skin rash or itching.
- Watery or puffy eyes.

REPORT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO YOUR DOCTOR