



Provincial Health Services Authority

**For the Patient: Venetoclax**  
Other names: VENCLEXTA®

- **Venetoclax** (ven et' oh klax) is a drug that is used to treat some types of cancer. It is a tablet that you take by mouth.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to venetoclax before taking venetoclax.
- **Blood tests** may be taken regularly during treatment. The dose and timing of your treatment may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.
- It is important to **take** venetoclax exactly as directed by your doctor. You will start on a low dose which will gradually be increased (ramp-up). Make sure you understand the directions. You may be given tablets of more than one strength to make the right dose. You may need to stay in the hospital for a few days while your dose is being adjusted.
- If you **miss a dose** of venetoclax, take it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed dose. If it is more than 12 hours since your missed dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing times. Call your doctor during office hours if a dose is skipped during ramp-up as the timing of your blood work and dosing may need to be changed.
- Your doctor will tell you to **drink** extra fluids during your treatment. This will help prevent a side effect known as tumour lysis syndrome.
- **Take** venetoclax with food.
- Do not chew, crush, or break venetoclax tablets. **Swallow whole**.
- If you **vomit** the dose of venetoclax, skip the missed dose and go back to your usual dosing time. Do not take any doses to make up for the missed dose. Call your healthcare team during office hours for advice as a medication to prevent nausea may be required for future doses.
- Other drugs such as digoxin (LANOXIN®), ketoconazole (NIZORAL®), rifampin (RIFADIN®), **ritonavir (NORVIR®)**, and warfarin (COUMADIN®) may **interact** with venetoclax. 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.

- **Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice** for the duration of your treatment, as these may interact with venetoclax.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of venetoclax.
- Venetoclax may affect **fertility** in men. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with venetoclax.
- Venetoclax may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with venetoclax and for at least 30 days after stopping treatment. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breastfeed during treatment.
- **Store** venetoclax tablets out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light, and moisture.
- **Tell** your doctor, dentist, and other health professionals that you are being treated with venetoclax before you receive any treatment from them.

#### Changes in blood counts

Venetoclax may cause temporary changes in your blood counts. 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 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.</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>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>• Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom.</li> <li>• Avoid crowds and people who are sick.</li> <li>• Call your healthcare team <b><i>immediately</i></b> 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.</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>At the start of treatment, when there may be a fast breakdown of cancer cells, <b>tumour lysis syndrome</b> (TLS) can occur. If this happens, you are at greater risk of having kidney damage and other serious side effects.</p>	<p><b>To help prevent TLS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water each day; start 2 to 3 days before your first dose.</li> <li>• You will receive a prescription for allopurinol to reduce your risk of TLS; start 3 days before the first dose of venetoclax.</li> <li>• Blood tests will be done before and after some or all dose increases. <b>Do not take your next dose until your doctor knows your blood test results and tells you it is safe to do so.</b></li> <li>• Call your healthcare team <b><i>immediately</i></b> if you have <b>more than one of</b> these symptoms: abdominal pain/nausea/vomiting, dark or cloudy urine, moodiness, restlessness, confusion, muscle/joint pain, or seizures.</li> </ul>

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Nausea</b> and <b>vomiting</b> may occur. <a href="#">If you are vomiting and it is not controlled, you can quickly become dehydrated.</a> Most people have little or no nausea.</p>	<p>You may be given a prescription for antinausea drug(s) to take 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> </ul> <p>Try the ideas in <i>Practical Tips to Manage Nausea</i>.*</p> <p><a href="#">Tell your healthcare team if nausea or vomiting continues or is not controlled with your antinausea drug(s).</a></p>
<p><b>Skin rashes</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>If itching is very irritating, call your healthcare team. Otherwise, be sure to mention it at your next visit.</p>
<p><b>Diarrhea</b> may sometimes occur. <a href="#">If you have diarrhea and it is not controlled, you can quickly become dehydrated.</a></p>	<p>If diarrhea is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts.</li> <li>• Avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <i>Food Choices to Help Manage Diarrhea</i>.* </li></ul> <p><a href="#">Tell your healthcare team if you have diarrhea for more than 24 hours.</a></p>
<p><b>Constipation</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise if you can.</li> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids.</li> <li>• Try ideas in <i>Food Choices to Manage Constipation</i>.*</li> </ul>
<p><b>Headache</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>Take acetaminophen (e.g., <b>TYLENOL®</b>) every 4-6 hours if needed, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day.</p>
<p><b>Muscle</b> or <b>joint pain</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>You may take acetaminophen (e.g., <b>TYLENOL®</b>) 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.</p>
<p><b>Sugar control</b> may sometimes be affected in diabetic patients.</p>	<p>Check your blood sugar regularly if you are diabetic.</p>
<p><b>Swelling</b> of hands, feet, or lower legs may sometimes 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>

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>Fatigue/Tiredness – Patient Handout</i>.*</li> </ul>
<b>Hair loss</b> does not occur with venetoclax.	

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

**STOP TAKING VENETOCLAX AND CHECK WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:**

- Signs of **tumour lysis syndrome**, such as more than one of these symptoms: abdominal pain/nausea/vomiting, dark or cloudy urine, moodiness, restlessness, confusion, shortness of breath, irregular heartbeat, unusual tiredness, fever/chills, seizure or muscle/joint pain.
- 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 **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.

**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.
- Signs of **gout** such as joint pain.

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

- Dizziness.
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- For diabetic patients: uncontrolled blood sugars.

**REPORT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM**

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