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NHS
University Hospitals of Leicester
NHS Trust

Low dose cytarabine (Low dose Ara C)

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Cancer Services

Information for Patients

Introduction

This leaflet is offered as a guide to you and your family; ideally it should be read with our general information booklet, “Chemotherapy: Advice on staying well during your treatment”. Your consultant and nurse will have discussed the risks and benefits of having this treatment with you and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Your doctor has prescribed the following course of chemotherapy:
low dose cytarabine (low dose Ara C)

How is it given?

This treatment is given twice a day, morning and evening, for ten days as a subcutaneous injection (subcutaneous means under the skin into fat).

The course will be repeated at intervals of between 28 and 42 days, depending on your blood counts. Before each course a blood test is taken, to check that you are well enough to receive your treatment.

How many courses you receive will depend on how you respond to the treatment.

Either you or a member of your family can be taught by the nursing staff how to give the injections. If you prefer, the district nurse team will be contacted and asked to administer it.

What are the side effects?

Each patient will react differently to treatment. Some people will experience very little in the way of side effects, others will have more. We will always work with you to keep side effects to a minimum. It is important to tell your nurse or doctor if you experience any problems so they can be monitored and, where possible, treated. Very occasionally people have rare side effects not mentioned on this sheet so it is a good idea to mention any changes. If in doubt, ask.

Below is a list of the more common side effects.

Bone marrow suppression: your bone marrow is where the cells that make up your blood are made; cytarabine reduces the number of cells being made, which may result in the following:

- **Reduced immunity:** this means you are more prone to infection and occurs when your white cells are low. If you have any signs of infection, for example sore throat, cough or feeling shivery, check your temperature. If it is above 37.5°C contact us at the hospital (numbers at the back of this book).
- **Low red cells (anaemia):** this can cause tiredness, breathlessness, dizziness and you may look a little pale. You may need a blood transfusion to correct this.
- **Low platelets:** this may cause bleeding (for example nosebleeds or bleeding gums) or bruising. If you experience any of these symptoms please inform us straight away, as you may need a platelet transfusion.
- **Diarrhoea:** if you suffer from diarrhoea, let us know. It may be a side effect of the treatment or it may be a symptom of infection - either way, we will need to investigate the cause.
- **Fatigue:** chemotherapy can make you feel tired and lacking in energy. This is a very common side effect. Macmillan Cancer Support produces a book about coping with fatigue, which is available from Macmillan or from the Macmillan Information and Support Centre (contact details are at the back of this booklet).
- **Feeling sick (nausea):** this is usually very mild and anti-sickness tablets can be given. Please let us know if this is a problem.
- **Skin irritation/bruising around injection site:** this is usually temporary. It may help if the site of the injection is changed each time it is given.
- **Sore mouth:** this may occur during treatment. A booklet entitled “How to look after your mouth” is available. Please ask a member of staff if you would like a copy.
- **Taste changes:** you may find that some food and drink taste different whilst on treatment. This is usually only temporary.

This is not an exhaustive list of side effects. If you require any more information, or have any problems please speak to the nurse. If in doubt, ask.

Other sources of information

Macmillan Information and Support Centre

Osborne Building

Leicester Royal Infirmary

Leicester

LE1 5WW

Monday to Friday 8.30 am to 4.30 pm

Phone: 0116 258 6189

Email: uhl-tr.cancerinformationcentre@nhs.net

Macmillan Cancer Support

Freephone: 0808 808 00 00

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

Bloodwise

Phone: 0808 2080 888

Website: www.bloodwise.org.uk

Leukaemia Care

Phone: 08088 010 444

Website: www.leukaemiacare.org.uk

Contact numbers

Haematology Nurse Specialist

(Key worker) 0116 258 5751

(Answer machine)

07984 471830 (mobile)

Available - Monday, Wednesday, Thursday Friday

If you are unwell, please call the emergency number:
0808 178 2212 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice
Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہِ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أُخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો.

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead
or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

We are a research hospital and you may be asked to take part in research

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