



Provincial Health Services Authority

## **For the Patient: HNAVPC**

Other Names: Treatment of Recurrent or Metastatic Squamous Cell Cancer with Paclitaxel and Cisplatin or Carboplatin

**HN** = Head and Neck

**AV** = AdVanced

**P** = Paclitaxel

**C** = Cisplatin or Carboplatin

### **ABOUT THIS MEDICATION**

#### **What are these drugs used for?**

- Paclitaxel, Cisplatin, and Carboplatin are intravenous anticancer medications used for many types of cancer.

#### **How do these drugs work?**

- Paclitaxel, Cisplatin, and Carboplatin interfere with the genetic material, DNA and RNA, of cancer cells to prevent their growth. The result is the cancer cell dies.

### **INTENDED BENEFITS**

- This therapy is being given to destroy and/or prevent the growth of new cancer cells in your body.
- This treatment may improve your current symptoms, and delay or prevent the onset of new symptoms.
- This treatment is expected to delay the progression of your cancer.

### **TREATMENT SUMMARY**

#### **How are these drugs given?**

- Paclitaxel and Cisplatin are given intravenously every 3 weeks. Each cycle is 21 days.
- This is repeated for 4 to 6 cycles.
- If your kidney function gets worse, Carboplatin will replace Cisplatin. Carboplatin is given intravenously every 3 weeks.

#### **What will happen when I get my drugs?**

- A blood test is done on within 1 month prior to starting your first treatment.
- A blood test is done before each treatment cycle.
- Between treatment cycles, a blood test is done following the first cycle and following any cycle when a dose was changed.
- The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on your blood counts and / or other side effects.
- You will be given a prescription for anti-nausea medication (filled at your regular pharmacy) that you bring in each time for your treatment. Your nurse will tell you when to take the anti-nausea medication. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it once it has occurred, so follow the suggestions given to you.
- To prevent nausea, be well-hydrated and eat small meals frequently. Refer to the pamphlet on “Food Choices to Help Control Nausea”.

## Treatment Protocol

### Cycle 1:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
<b>Paclitaxel + Cisplatin (or Carboplatin)</b>	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo
Day 8	Day 9	Day 10D	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14
No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo
Day 15	Day 16	Day 17	Day `18	Day 19	Day 20	Day 21
No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	

**This 21-day cycle will repeat 4 to 6 more times.**

## **CHEMOTHERAPY SIDE EFFECTS AND MANAGEMENT**

### **Are there any risks?**

- Unexpected and unlikely side effects can occur with any drug treatment. The ones listed in the following tables are particularly important for you to be aware of as they are directly related to the common actions of the drugs in your treatment plan.

SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS	How common is it?	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Allergic reactions</b> may occur with paclitaxel. Signs of an allergic reaction include flushing, rash, itching, swelling and breathing problems. These allergic reactions most often occur during the first hour of treatment.</p>	<p>common</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dexamethasone, diphenhydramine, and ranitidine are given to you before you receive paclitaxel.</li> <li>• Tell your nurse <b>immediately</b> if you notice any of the listed symptoms.</li> </ul>
<p>When your <b>white blood cells</b> are low, you are at greater <b>risk of having an infection</b>. White blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection.</p>	<p>very common</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>• Take care of your skin and mouth</li> <li>• Avoid crowds and people who are sick</li> <li>• Call your doctor <b>immediately</b> at the first sign of <b>infection</b> such as fever (over 38°C or 100°F by an oral thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.</li> </ul>
<p>When your <b>platelets</b> are low, you are at greater <b>risk of bruising or bleeding more easily than usual</b>.</p>	<p>very common</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> <li>• Some medications such as ASA (e.g. Aspirin®) or ibuprofen (e.g. ADVIL®) may increase your risk of bleeding.</li> <li>• Many natural health products may increase your risk of bleeding.</li> <li>• Do not stop taking any medication prescribed by your doctor.</li> <li>• For minor pain, try acetaminophen (TYLENOL®) first, but occasional use of ibuprofen is acceptable.</li> </ul>

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS	How common is it?	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b> may occur after your treatment and may last for up to 24 hours. Nausea may last longer for some patients (ie. Delayed nausea and vomiting)</p>	<p>very common</p>	<p>You will be given a prescription for anti-nausea drug(s) to take before your chemotherapy treatment and/or at home. It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred, 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="#">Food Choices to Help Control Nausea</a></li> </ul> <p>Your doctor may manage delayed nausea and vomiting differently. Be sure to let your doctor know if you experience this.</p>
<p><b>Hair loss</b> is common with paclitaxel and may begin within a few or weeks of treatment. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment. Colour and texture may change.</p>	<p>very common</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> <li>• Protect your scalp with a hat, scarf or wig in cold weather. Some extended health plans will pay part of the cost of a wig.</li> <li>• Cover your head or apply sunblock on sunny days.</li> <li>• Apply mineral oil to your scalp to reduce itching.</li> <li>• If you lose your eyelashes and eyebrows, protect your eyes from dust and grit with a broad-rimmed hat and glasses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Muscle or joint pain</b> may commonly occur a few days after your treatment.</p>	<p>very common</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 or ibuprofen (e.g., <b>ADVIL®</b>) for mild to moderate pain. Tell your doctor if the pain interferes with your activity.</p>
<p><b>Numbness or tingling</b> of the fingers or toes may sometimes occur. This will slowly return to normal once your treatments are over. This may take several months.</p>	<p>common</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be careful when handling items that are sharp, hot, or cold.</li> <li>• Tell your doctor at your next visit, especially if you have trouble with buttons, writing, or picking up small objects.</li> </ul>

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS	How common is it?	MANAGEMENT
<b>Tiredness</b> and lack of energy may occur.	common	<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 of energy savings: How people with cancer can handle fatigue</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Sore mouth</b> may sometimes occur after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth, or in the throat. Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.	uncommon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Make a mouthwash with ½ teaspoon baking soda or salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas for a Sore Mouth During Chemotherapy</i>.*</li> </ul>

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PATIENT**

### **What other drugs can interact with paclitaxel, cisplatin or carboplatin?**

- Antibiotics given by vein (e.g., tobramycin, gentamicin), and phenytoin (DILANTIN®) may interact with carboplatin and cisplatin.
- Disulfiram (ANTABUSE®) and metronidazole (FLAGYL®) may interact with paclitaxel.
- Warfarin (COUMADIN®) may interact with carboplatin and paclitaxel.
- Pyridoxine, or Vitamin B6, may interact with cisplatin.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new prescriptions or non-prescription products.

### **Other important things to know:**

- Cisplatin can cause changes in kidney function. It is important to be well-hydrated before and after your treatment. Drink 2 to 3 cups of water on the morning of your treatment. Drink 8 to 12 cups of liquids after your treatment. This helps prevent kidney problems.
- Your doctor may ask you to take a hearing test before and at various times during your treatment with cisplatin. This helps to detect hearing problems.

## **THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS VERY IMPORTANT**

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

- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 38°C or 100°F by oral thermometer), shaking chills, severe sore throat, productive cough (coughing up thick or green sputum), pain or burning when you pass urine.
- Signs of an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heartbeat, face swelling or breathing problems.
- 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 **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools, blood in urine, pinpoint red spots on skin, extensive bruising.
- Signs of a **stroke** such as sudden onset of severe headache, eyesight changes, slurred speech, loss of coordination, weakness or numbness in arm or leg.
- Redness, swelling, pain or sores where the needle was placed

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

- Signs of kidney problems such as lower back pain or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs, numbness or tingling in feet or hands, blood in urine, or cloudy urine.
- Signs of liver problems such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

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

- Easy bruising or bleeding
- Redness, swelling, pain or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth or throat
- Signs of anemia such as unusual tiredness or weakness
- Skin rash or itching
- Numbness or tingling in feet or hands or painful leg cramps

**If you experience symptoms or changes in your body that have not been described above but worry you, or in any symptoms are severe, contact:**

\_\_\_\_\_ at telephone  
number: \_\_\_\_\_