



**BC Cancer Agency**

CARE + RESEARCH

*An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority*

## **For the Patient: HNAVDOC**

Treatment of Recurrent or Metastatic Squamous Cell Cancer of the Head and Neck with docetaxel

**HN=Head and Neck**

**AV=Advanced**

**DOC=Docetaxel**

### **ABOUT THIS MEDICATION**

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

- Docetaxel is an anticancer drug used to treat cancers in the area of the neck and throat.

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

- Docetaxel blocks actively growing cancer cells and prevents the growth of new cancer cells. The result is a decrease in number of cancer cells.

### **INTENDED BENEFITS**

- This treatment destroys and/or limits the growth of cancer cells in your body.
- This treatment may improve your current symptoms, and/or delay the onset of new symptoms.
- It may take a few treatments before your doctor can tell whether or not this treatment is helping you.

### **TREATMENT SUMMARY**

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

- Docetaxel is given intravenously (through a vein) on the first day of each cycle. Each cycle is repeated every 21 days for 6 cycles.
- You will be given a prescription for dexamethasone tablets that you take by mouth. It helps to prevent fluid retention, nausea, and allergic reactions. These prescriptions are filled at your regular pharmacy. Start taking the dexamethasone with food the morning and evening of the day before your treatment then the third dose the morning of the day of your treatment. You must take 3 doses of dexamethasone before your docetaxel treatment.

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

- A blood test is done before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on your blood counts and / or other side effects.
- You may be given frozen gloves to wear on your hands to prevent nail changes from docetaxel.

## HNAVDOC Treatment Protocol

### Cycle 1:

<b>Day 1</b>	<b>Day 2</b>	<b>Day 3</b>	<b>Day 4</b>	<b>Day 5</b>	<b>Day 6</b>	<b>Day 7</b>
<b>Docetaxel</b>	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo
<b>Day 8</b>	<b>Day 9</b>	<b>Day 10</b>	<b>Day 11</b>	<b>Day 12</b>	<b>Day 13</b>	<b>Day 14</b>
no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo
<b>Day 15</b>	<b>Day 16</b>	<b>Day 17</b>	<b>Day 18</b>	<b>Day 19</b>	<b>Day 20</b>	<b>Day 21</b>
no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo	no chemo
<b>Day 22</b>	<b>Day 23</b>	<b>Day 24</b>	<b>Day 25</b>	<b>Day 26</b>	<b>Day 27</b>	<b>Day 28</b>
<b>Cycle 2</b>						
<b>Docetaxel</b>						

This 21-day cycle will repeat for up to 6 times.

### SIDE EFFECTS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM

- Unexpected and unlikely side effects can occur with any drug treatment. The ones listed below are particularly important for you to be aware of as they are directly related to the common actions of the drug in your treatment plan.
- Refer to individual drug information sheets for the specific side effects of each drug.

<b>SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS</b>	<b>How common is it?</b>	<b>MANAGEMENT</b>
<b>Allergic reactions</b> may sometimes occur. Signs of an allergic reaction may include rash, itching, dizziness, swelling or breathing problems, joint or muscle pain.	common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your <b>dexamethasone</b> tablets as directed by your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.</li> <li>• Tell your nurse if this happens while you are receiving docetaxel or contact your oncologist <b>immediately</b> if this happens after you leave the clinic.</li> </ul>
<b>Fluid retention</b> may occur. Signs of extra fluid build-up are <b>swelling</b> of feet, hands or belly, breathing problems, cough, or rapid weight gain.	very common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your <b>dexamethasone</b> tablets as directed by your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.</li> <li>• Elevate your feet when sitting.</li> <li>• Avoid tight clothing.</li> </ul> Tell your doctor at your next visit.
Your <b>white blood cells</b> may decrease 1 week after your treatment. They usually return to normal within 3 weeks. 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>	very common	To help prevent infection: <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><b>Pain or tenderness</b> may occur where the needle was placed.</p>	<p>very rare</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell your nurse or doctor <b>immediately</b> if you feel burning, stinging, or any other change while the drug is being given.</li> <li>• Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day.</li> </ul>
OTHER SIDE EFFECTS	How common is it?	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Fever</b> may occur shortly after treatment with Docetaxel. Fever should last no longer than 24 hours.</p>	<p>Common</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®) every 3-4 hours.</li> <li>• Fever which occurs more than 48 hours after treatment may be the sign of an infection. See details under “white blood cells”.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hair loss</b> is common and may begin within a few days or weeks of treatment. Your hair may thin or you may lose it completely. Your scalp may feel tender. Hair loss may occur on your face and body. In most cases, your hair will grow back once your treatments are over and sometimes between treatments. Rarely, hair may not grow back for more than 2 years. Colour and texture may change.</p>	<p>very common</p>	<p>Refer to <i>“For the Patient: Hair Loss Due to Chemotherapy”</i>. You may want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>Diarrhea</b> may sometimes occur.</p>	<p>common</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 Ideas to Help with Diarrhea During Chemotherapy”</i>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sore mouth</b> may occur a few days after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth, or in the throat. <b>Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.</b></p>	<p>common</p>	<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 for a Sore Mouth During Chemotherapy”</i>.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Skin rashes</b> may occur, mainly on the feet, hands, arms, face or chest. Rashes generally clear before the next treatment.</p>	<p>common</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply a moisturizer to dry skin several times a day.</li> <li>• If itchy, may use calamine lotion.</li> </ul> <p>If itching is very irritating, call your doctor during office hours or mention it at your next visit.</p>
<p><b>Nail changes</b> such as change in colour may occur. Rarely, nails will loosen or fall off, or the nail beds will be painful.</p>	<p>common</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may be given frozen gloves to wear on your hands during your treatment to help prevent nail changes.</li> <li>• Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 3-4 hours if nails are painful.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tiredness</b> and lack of energy may commonly occur.</p>	<p>common</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>“Your Bank to Energy Savings: Helping People with Cancer Handle Fatigue”</i>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Numbness or tingling of the fingers or toes</b> 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>
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b> may occur after your treatment. Most people have little or no nausea.</p>	<p>uncommon</p>	<p>Take your <b>dexamethasone</b> tablets as directed by your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.</p> <p>You may be given a prescription for anti-nausea drug(s) to take before your 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 <i>“Food Choices to Control Nausea”</i>.</li> </ul>

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PATIENT**

### **What other drugs can interact with docetaxel?**

- Other drugs such as disulfiram (ANTABUSE®), metronidazole (FLAGYL®), and ketoconazole (NIZORAL®) may interact with docetaxel. 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 FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS VERY IMPORTANT**

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

- Signs of an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heartbeat, face swelling, or breathing problems.
- 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 **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.
- 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.
- 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.

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

- Signs of **abdominal discomfort** including new pain, bloating or cramping.
- Signs of **fluid retention** such as shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, bothersome swelling of the feet or lower legs.
- Severe **skin reaction** where you have had radiation.
- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Increased **sore throat or mouth** that makes it difficult to swallow comfortably.

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

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores where the needle was placed.
- Skin rash or itching.
- Taste alterations.
- Tearing of eyes.

**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: \_\_\_\_\_