



Provincial Health Services Authority

For the Patient: **PROTOCOL SMDTIC**

Other Names: Palliative Therapy for Metastatic Malignant Melanoma Using High Dose Dacarbazine (DTIC)

SM = Melanoma

DTIC = DTIC(Dacarbazine)

ABOUT THIS MEDICATION

What is this drug used for?

- **Dacarbazine** (da kar' ba zeen) is a drug that is used to treat many types of cancer. It is a clear liquid that is injected into a vein.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to temozolomide (TEMODAL®) or dacarbazine before taking dacarbazine.

How does this drug work?

- Dacarbazine kills cancer cells by preventing their normal cell division and growth.

INTENDED BENEFITS

- This therapy is being given to destroy and/or limit the growth of cancer cells in your body. It may improve your current symptoms, and delay or prevent the onset of new ones.
- It may take several treatments before your doctor can determine whether or not this treatment is helping.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

How is this drug given?

- Dacarbazine is a clear liquid that is injected into a vein by a nurse.
- Dacarbazine is injected in to a vein over 1-2 hours once every 21 days. This 21 day period is called a “cycle”. The cycle is repeated until stable disease for four treatments or disease progression. But the treatment schedule may be changed based on how the chemotherapy affects you.

The following calendar outlines your treatment plan for each cycle.

Cycle 1:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
• Blood Test • Dacarbazine infusion	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo	No chemo
Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	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	No chemo

This 21-day cycle will repeat until stable disease for four treatments or disease progression.

What will happen when I get my drug?

- Your very first appointment for this treatment will take longer than other appointments because a nurse will be reviewing the possible side effects of your chemotherapy plan and how to manage them. It is a good idea to bring someone with you to your first appointment for this treatment.
- A blood test is done before each cycle, within 4 days of each treatment. 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 drugs to be filled at your local community pharmacy. Please bring your anti-nausea medications with you for each treatment. Your nurse will tell you when to take the anti-nausea medication. You may also need to take your anti-nausea drugs at home after therapy. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it once it happens, so follow directions closely.
- Dacarbazine may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with dacarbazine. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- **Tell** doctors, dentists, and other health professionals that you are being treated with dacarbazine before you receive any treatment from them.

SIDE EFFECTS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM

Are there any risks?

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.

SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS	How common is it?	MANAGEMENT
Your white blood cells may decrease 10-14 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 1-3 weeks after your last 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.	Common	To help prevent infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom. • Avoid crowds and people who are sick. • Call your doctor immediately 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.
Your platelets may decrease 12-18 days after your treatment. They usually return to normal 1-3 weeks after your last treatment. Platelets help to make your blood clot when you hurt yourself. You may bruise or bleed more easily than usual.	Common	To help prevent bleeding problems: <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. • Some medications such as ASA (e.g., ASPIRIN®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL®) may increase your risk of bleeding. • 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.

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS	How common is it?	MANAGEMENT
Dacarbazine burns if it leaks under the skin.	Very Rare	Tell your nurse or doctor immediately if you feel burning, stinging, or any other change while the drug is being given.
Pain or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed.	Common	Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day.
Nausea and vomiting may occur after your treatment and may last for 1-12 hours.	Very Common	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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink plenty of fluids. • Eat and drink often in small amounts. • Try the ideas in <i>Food Choices to Help Control Nausea</i>.*
A flu-like illness may rarely occur shortly after your treatment. You may have fever, chills, muscle aches, and joint aches. Flu-like symptoms usually disappear on their own.	Rare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) every 4-6 hours if needed, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day. • More than 48 hours after treatment, if you have fever plus another sign of infection, call your doctor immediately. These other signs include 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.
Skin rashes may rarely occur.	Rare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moisturizing creams can help prevent or reduce skin dryness. • If itching is very irritating, call your doctor. Otherwise, be sure to mention it at your next visit.

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS	How common is it?	MANAGEMENT
Your skin may sunburn more easily than usual. Sunburn is more common right after treatment with dacarbazine and usually lasts 1-4 days.	Uncommon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid direct sunlight and tanning salons. • Wear a hat, long sleeves, and long pants or skirt outside on sunny days. • Wear a sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB and has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Apply liberally, 30 minutes before exposure. Reapply every 2 hours and after swimming. • Consult the <i>BC Health Guide</i> or your community pharmacist for more information.
Loss of appetite is common after treatment with dacarbazine.	Very Common	Try the ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite</i> .*
Tiredness and lack of energy may sometimes occur.	Common	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <input type="checkbox"/> Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. • Try the ideas in <i>Your bank of energy savings: How people with cancer can handle fatigue</i>.
Hair loss is rare with dacarbazine. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment with dacarbazine. Colour and texture may change.	Rare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <input type="checkbox"/> Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Care should be taken with use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PATIENT

What other drugs can interact with Dacarbazine?

- Other drugs such as levodopa (PROLOPA®, SINEMET®) may **interact** with dacarbazine. 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 **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of dacarbazine.

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 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 an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heart beat, face swelling, or breathing problems.
- **Seizures** or **loss of consciousness**.
- Repeated **vomiting** and cannot keep fluids and medications down after chemotherapy.

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

- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Signs of **kidney problems** such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs.

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

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or weight loss.
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores where the needle was placed.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth, or throat.
- Skin rash or itching.
- Numbness or tingling of the face.
- Dizziness.
- Changes in eyesight.

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: _____