



Provincial Health Services Authority

For the Patient: GOCXCRT

Other Names: Treatment of High Risk Squamous Carcinoma, Adenocarcinoma, or Adenosquamous Carcinoma of the Cervix with Concurrent Cisplatin and Radiation

GO = Gynecologic Oncology (tumor group)

CX = Cervix

C = Cisplatin

RT = Radiation Therapy

ABOUT THIS MEDICATION

What are these drugs used for?

- Cisplatin is an intravenous drug treatment given as therapy to treat some types of cervical cancer, and sometimes also other gynecologic cancers.

How do these drugs work?

- Cisplatin works by interfering with the genetic material of replicating cells and preventing an increase in the number of cancer cells.
- Cisplatin acts as a radiosensitizer by augmenting the effect of radiation therapy.

INTENDED BENEFITS

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

TREATMENT SUMMARY

How are these drugs given?

- Cisplatin will be given intravenously (via the vein) once weekly during your radiation therapy treatment. Prior to cisplatin being given you may receive additional hydration over an hour in order to prevent any kidney problems.
- Cisplatin will be given every 7 days for up to 5 cycles (i.e. 5 weeks). The days when you are receiving this medication, together with the days-off after them, may be referred to as a “cycle”.

What will happen when I get my drugs?

- A blood test is done each cycle, on or about the day before each treatment day. The dose and timing of your treatment may be changed based on your blood counts and/or other side effects.

- You will be given a prescription for anti-nausea medications (to be filled at your regular pharmacy). Please bring your anti-nausea medications with you to each treatment. Your nurse will tell you when to take the anti-nausea medication(s). You may also need to take your anti-nausea drugs at home after treatment. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it once it happens, so follow directions closely.
- It is important that you increase your fluid intake throughout the treatment period. Drink lots of fluids for a few days before, the day of and a couple of days after each chemotherapy day (at least 6-8 cups a day).
- Avoid taking any medications such as ibuprofen (e.g. ADVIL®), ASA (e.g. ASPIRIN®) on the day that you will be receiving Cisplatin, as it may impact the rate that Cisplatin is eliminated from the body and increase risk of kidney problems.

MEDICATION INTERACTIONS

- Other drugs such as some antibiotics given by vein (e.g., tobramycin, vancomycin), and furosemide (LASIX®), phenytoin (DILANTIN®) and pyridoxine may ***interact*** with Cisplatin. Tell your doctor if you are taking the above 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 taking any new drugs.

Serious Side Effects of Chemotherapy:

Unexpected and unlikely side effects can occur with any drug treatment. The ones listed below are particularly relevant to your treatment plan:

During treatment:

- **Infection:** The number of white blood cells that help fight infection may be lowered by the chemotherapy drugs, usually starting after about 7 days. Your blood count is expected to return to normal by day 1 of the next cycle, and will return to normal after the 5 weeks of chemotherapy treatment. If your white blood cell count becomes very low you could get a serious infection. **If you have a fever over 38°C or 100°F, call your cancer doctor immediately (24 hours a day) or go immediately to your nearest Hospital Emergency and tell the doctor you are on chemotherapy.**
- **Increased risk of bleeding:** The number of platelets (special blood cells that help your blood to clot normally after injury) may be lowered by the treatment. They are expected to return to normal by day 1 of next cycle. When the platelet count is low you may be more likely to bruise or bleed. Notify your cancer doctor promptly if you develop large or numerous bruises, or unusual bleeding (e.g. nosebleed that won't stop, blood in stool, urine, or sputum). Try to avoid using ASA or ibuprofen, if other pain medications could be used, as they may increase the risk of bleeding or kidney problems, but if you need to use one of these medications, let your doctor know. For patients receiving Warfarin, a modification of the dose may be required based on blood test results (increased INR due to possible interaction with chemotherapy).

- **Tissue or vein injury:** Cisplatin can cause tissue injury if they leak out of the vein while being given. Report any sensation of burning or pain to your nurse immediately. Chemotherapy may cause some inflammation and/or scarring in the veins, which may make it difficult to start an IV. Your nurse will help your doctor assess whether a special intravenous device (PICC line or central IVAD) needs to be considered for your therapy. Pain or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed in your vein. If so, apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day.

During or after treatment:

- **Neuropathy:** Cisplatin can cause you to develop damage to the peripheral nerve endings (the nerves to the hands and feet, and rarely, the face). This can result in feelings of numbness and tingling, or sometimes painful burning sensations. You will need to be careful when handling things that are sharp, hot, or very cold. The majority of the times, these feelings develop after a number of treatments, are not severe, and will resolve fully over a period of months once treatment stops. Infrequently (<5%), these feelings might occur early, might be severe, or might not entirely resolve. There is more chance of problems being severe or lasting if treatment is very prolonged.
- **Hearing Problems:** One of the nerves which can be damaged by Cisplatin is the nerve which allows you to hear. This could result in you experiencing “tinnitus”, or ringing in the ears, or loss of hearing. Report to your doctor and/or nurse if you are experiencing these types of difficulties, and make sure they are aware of hearing problems, if these exist prior to any treatment. In many cases, these symptoms go away after Cisplatin is stopped.
- **Kidney Dysfunction:** Cisplatin can cause changes in kidney function, but this is not frequent with the doses used in this regimen. It is important that you are well-hydrated before and after treatment, to help avoid kidney damage from Cisplatin. Call your treatment centre if you having major difficulties with nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea after treatment, as you may need intravenous fluids and medications to help you through. Your doctor will check your blood prior to each treatment cycle, to make sure no significant damage is occurring to your kidneys from this drug.

Common chemotherapy side effects and management:

| SIDE EFFECT | MANAGEMENT |
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| Nausea and vomiting can occur with Cisplatin. You will need anti-nausea drugs for Cisplatin each week of treatment. | <p>Follow the directions on your anti-nausea pill bottles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred, so follow directions closely. • If you have a lot of nausea despite your medications, contact your clinic for advice. • Refer to the following pamphlets: <i>For the Patient: Managing Nausea; Chemotherapy & You; Food choices to help control nausea*</i>. |
| Mouth sores may occur a few days after chemotherapy treatment and may last days or weeks. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, gums, and the sides of the mouth or in the throat. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Try baking soda mouth rinses (using 1/4 tsp baking soda in 1 cup warm water) and rinse several times a day. Try ideas in <i>Easy to chew, easy to swallow food ideas*</i>. • Tell your doctor about a sore mouth, as your chemotherapy doses may need to be decreased if mouth sores are severe. Call your doctor if you are having difficulty eating or drinking due to pain. |
| Fatigue, unusual tiredness or weakness may occur commonly. As the number of treatment cycles increase, fatigue may get worse. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>. • Let your doctor or nurse know if you continue to feel more tired than usual. • Your energy level will improve with time after treatment is completed. |
| Hair loss is uncommon with Cisplatin. | |

If you experience symptoms or changes in your body that have not been described above but worry you, or if any symptoms are severe, contact _____ at telephone number _____