

Adjuvant Temozolomide

Your doctor has suggested that you may benefit from a course of temozolamide chemotherapy. They will have weighed the potential benefits of treatment, in terms of controlling the cancer and its symptoms, against the possibilities of side effects. Your doctor will have discussed these with you.

This factsheet provides further information about the chemotherapy you have been offered called temozolamide. It is additional to the general chemotherapy booklet *Chemotherapy, your questions answered*. Please ask a member of the medical team if you have not received a copy of this booklet or if any of the information given to you is unclear.

Treatment plan

Temozolomide is a type of drug that is used for the treatment of brain tumours. It works by stopping cancer cells from dividing and multiplying. You will take temozolomide for five consecutive days every four weeks. Each four-week period is referred to as a 'cycle' of chemotherapy. This means that you will take temozolomide on days one to five of each cycle. Days six to 28 are a rest period. You will have six cycles of temozolomide, as long as you remain well and are benefiting from it.

It is best to take the temozolomide on an empty stomach - take the temozolomide either before you go to bed, or first thing in the morning.

Temozolomide can cause nausea and/or vomiting so please take the anti-sickness medication prescribed half an hour before taking the drug.

Blood tests

You will need regular blood tests while you are taking temozolomide treatment. This is because temozolomide can affect the production of blood cells in the bone marrow. Blood tests will be done when you attend the clinic every four weeks just before each cycle of temozolomide.

Imaging

You will probably have an MRI or CT scan after cycle 2, cycle 4 and cycle 6 to assess the effectiveness of the treatment at each of these stages.

Side effects of chemotherapy

All drugs can have some side effects and this includes chemotherapy. The main problems you may experience are as follows:



Nausea - Chemotherapy may cause sickness. If you feel sick, please contact your specialist nurse - mention it when attending for treatment or when you are seen in clinic and we will give you another anti-sickness medication.

Low blood count - Which may cause:

- Anaemia (low red cell count) – you may need blood transfusions.
- Neutropenia (low white cell count), which may increase your risk of developing an infection.
- Thrombocytopenia (low platelet count) which may increase tendency to bleeding – you may need platelet transfusions.

Constipation - This is usually caused by anti-sickness medication. Please contact a member of the team if this is a problem for you.

Rash - If you have a rash, please contact a member of the team.

Tiredness - Temozolomide may cause a degree of tiredness.

Pregnancy

We advise you to use contraception during and after treatment, because the effect of chemotherapy on the unborn child is not clear. Women able to have children will be asked to have a pregnancy test before starting the chemotherapy treatment. Men will be given the opportunity to save their sperm in a sperm bank. We will discuss this with you during the consenting process and before the beginning of treatment.

Many of the drugs used to treat cancer can lead to the development of other cancers many years later. Laboratory tests have shown that temozolomide may cause cancer and has caused breast, soft tissue and skin tumours in rats, but the significance for humans is not presently known and second tumours in people taking temozolomide have not been reported.

Taking temozolomide

Morning regime

1. On waking take anti-sickness tablet(s) - wait 30 minutes
2. Take temozolomide and do not eat or drink for one hour
3. Eat breakfast
4. Take other medication as per medication chart.

Evening regime

1. Do not eat or drink one hour before bedtime
2. Take anti-sickness tablet(s) 30 minutes before bedtime
3. At bedtime, take temozolomide and go to sleep.

Temozolomide = chemotherapy (daily as instructed on bottle)

Ondansetron 8mg = anti-sickness tablet, take one tablet 30 minutes before chemotherapy and as instructed on the bottle (maximum twice a day).



Some of the terminology used in this factsheet may be unfamiliar; please do not hesitate to ask one of the team for further explanation if there is anything you do not understand.

Neuro-oncology team contact details

Please see separate information sheet.

