

# Carboplatin and Paclitaxel Chemotherapy

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The chemotherapy drugs that you are on are: Carboplatin and Paclitaxel (Taxol).

These drugs attack and destroy the cancer cells. While doing this, they also destroy healthy cells. The healthy cells most commonly affected are the lining of your mouth and digestive system, the vagina, bone marrow and hair.

Side effects you may have because of this are mouth sores, nausea, vomiting, low white blood count and hair loss. Other common side effects from these drugs include: constipation or diarrhea and fatigue.

**Should you find that the drugs that we have prescribed for you to control these side effects are not working, call the office and speak with your nurse or review it at your next visit before chemotherapy.**

## Dealing with the side effects

### To prevent constipation

We recommend that you use Colace 100mg tablets. Colace is a stool softener and is also called Docusate Sodium or calcium. You can buy it over-the-counter at your drugstore. These should be taken at least twice a day – morning and night – for the first 3 days of your chemotherapy treatment. You can also talk to your pharmacist about how to take this medication.

### Diarrhea

If you have diarrhea, stop taking the Colace. With each treatment, you will learn how to adjust the Colace to maintain a healthy bowel routine that works for you.

### Hair loss

Hair loss usually happens after the second treatment. If you have really long hair, you may find it easier to cut it shorter or even shave it off when hair loss begins to happen.

You may want to wear a wig. If you chose to do so, a prescription and list of shops that carry wigs can be provided to you. Some women choose to wear a bandana or scarf during their treatment. You may choose not to cover your head. We recommend that you switch to a baby shampoo during this time, as it is less drying to your scalp and helps prevent itching.

When the time comes, you will do what is best for you.

### Mouth sores

If you have mouth sores after your treatment, try to avoid hot, spicy or acidic foods. Also, brush your teeth very gently with a soft toothbrush or sponge, as your gums may be very sensitive and may bleed easily. Avoid rough flossing during this time. Some patients say they have a change of taste after treatment. This is normal. Discuss this with your doctor or nurse at your next visit.

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### Nausea and vomiting

You will find that for the first 3 days after your treatment you feel well. This is related to one of the medications we give you to help prevent nausea. It is called Dexamethasone or Decadron. It is a steroid, so you may find that it “revs” you up giving you lots of energy. Please take it as prescribed:

- The night before and the morning of chemotherapy.
- During the 3 days that you take it after chemotherapy, take 1 tablet at 8:00 am and 4:00 pm with food – check your handout. If it is taken later than that, most patients complain of not being able to sleep. You may take other medications for nausea or vomiting, as prescribed by your doctor.

### Fatigue

Patients usually say that they feel their best during the first 3 days after chemotherapy. After that, you may have a loss of energy and may have a general feeling of being unwell. This usually lasts from day 4 to day 7.

### Infection

You may get an infection after chemotherapy. The usual sign that you may be getting an infection is a fever that is greater than 38.5°C. **If you have a fever greater than 38.5°C or 101.3°F or feel very unwell, please contact your doctor’s office for further direction at 905-387-9495.**

White blood cells will be at their lowest point from days 7 to 14. White blood cells are important to help your body fight infection. During days 7 to 14 try to avoid being with people who are sick with illnesses such as cold, coughs.

Sometimes, your white blood count will be too low to give you chemotherapy. You may feel well, but it would be unsafe to give you chemotherapy at this time. The chemotherapy would affect your ability to fight off any infections that you may be exposed to.

### Blood work

We check your blood work before each cycle of chemotherapy. However, you may need to have blood work done on day 14 to allow us to check how well your body is recovering from the chemotherapy. During days 14 to 21, patients state that they generally feel back to normal.

## **Aches and pains**

Some patients may get a deep pain in their joints after treatment. Do not take **ASA, Advil, Motrin or Ibuprofen** during treatment because it may affect your blood counts and act as a blood thinner.

Take Tylenol and use a heating pad or hot water bottle to the painful areas. **If this does not work call your doctors office for further direction at 905-387-9495.**

## **Numbness and tingling**

Other side effects include numbness or tingling in your hands and or feet. The nerves become affected by the chemotherapy and some patients have tingling in their hands or feet. This may start in one or more fingers and toes. Sometimes the tingling comes and goes, other times it lasts for a period of time. **If the tingling becomes constant, please discuss it with your doctor.**

## **Before each chemotherapy treatment**

We check your blood work and review any symptoms you may be having at each visit before chemotherapy. Be sure to write down any symptoms that you have on a calendar to “track” any patterns.

Once your 6 cycles are complete, you will have follow up visits with your oncologist. During this visit, the oncologist will ask you questions about how you are doing and may do a physical exam.

**At any time, if you have questions, concerns or troubling symptoms, please contact your oncologist/nurse to discuss at 905-387-9495.**

## **Research**

Research has shown that these 2 drugs given together once every 3 weeks, works the best to treat your type of cancer. This is called the standard of care.

During your treatment, you may be asked to take part in a research study. The research will be explained to you. You can decide whether you want to take part or not. If you decide not to take part, your care will not be affected.



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