

# Anti-sickness medicines after your chemotherapy

This leaflet contains information about the anti-sickness medicines you need to take following your chemotherapy. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist caring for you.

## What are anti-sickness medicines?

Different chemotherapy drugs can cause different amounts of sickness (also called nausea). Your doctor will therefore prescribe anti-sickness medicines (anti-emetics) to help control any sickness caused by your chemotherapy treatment. Your nurse will give you these medicines before you start chemotherapy and you will also be given some to take at home afterwards.

Please read this leaflet alongside the manufacturer's patient information leaflets that are supplied with the medicines.

## How do I take these medicines?

It is important that you follow the instructions you have been given on how to take the medicines, because it is easier to prevent sickness than to treat it once it has started. If you take the medicines as advised but you still feel sick, please tell your doctor or nurse as soon as possible, so that we can change the medicines to help you cope better.

## What should I do if I forget to take them?

If you forget to take your medicines, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and return to your normal dosing schedule. **Do not take a double dose under any circumstances.**

## Are there any side effects?

Sometimes anti-sickness medicines may cause side effects. Different medicines will have different side effects and each person may react differently. Some of the more common side effects are listed over the page, alongside the medicines that may cause them.

Further information on side effects can be found in the manufacturer's patient information leaflet, which is supplied with each of the anti-sickness medicines. If you have any questions or concerns about side effects, please speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

- **Constipation** – Aprepitant and ondansetron can cause constipation. This can usually be relieved by drinking plenty of fluids, eating a high-fibre diet and doing gentle exercise. Sometimes you may need to take laxatives to stimulate your bowel. Your doctor can prescribe these.

- **Headaches** – Aprepitant and ondansetron can cause headaches. Let your doctor know if you get headaches while having either of these medicines.
- **Flushing of the skin** – Ondansetron and dexamethasone can cause flushing or a sensation of warmth. Although this is rare, tell your doctor if you have this side effect.
- **Indigestion** – Aprepitant and dexamethasone can cause indigestion. It may help to take the tablets with or after food. If you develop indigestion, please tell your doctor, as they can prescribe medicines to help.
- **Stomach cramps** – Domperidone can cause stomach cramps. Let your doctor know if you get stomach cramps.
- **Twitching** – Metoclopramide may cause uncontrolled muscle twitching that affects different parts of the body (including limbs and face). This is more common in young adults. If you notice this effect, stop taking the tablets and tell your doctor, as other medicines may suit you better.
- **Palpitations** – Domperidone may cause palpitations (heartbeats that suddenly become more noticeable). If you experience this side effect stop taking domperidone and contact your doctor as soon as possible
- **Wakefulness (insomnia)** – Dexamethasone may make it difficult for you to get to sleep. For this reason you should take the dose in the morning, where possible, and no later than 2pm

If you experience any side effects that are not listed above, please discuss them with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

## What do I do if my sickness is not controlled?

If you feel your sickness is not well controlled despite taking the full dose of your tablets regularly, let your doctor know at the next hospital visit and they may adjust your anti-emetics.

If your sickness is severe and you are unable to eat or drink, contact the acute oncology assessment unit (see contact details on page 3) and they will tell you what to do.

If you are sick within 20 minutes of taking any tablets and you think that you have vomited them out, you may take a repeat dose if and when you feel able.

If you are vomiting and this lasts for 24 hours, or if you have been unable to keep your tablets down for 24 hours, contact the acute oncology assessment unit immediately for assessment and advice regarding further action.

## How do I get further supplies?

We have given you enough supply of each medicine for you to complete the course. If you are having further chemotherapy, you will receive further supplies of the anti-sickness medicines before you go home. The nurse will give you a medication sheet with further information of your anti-sickness medicines. Please request this if you have not received a copy.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your chemotherapy or side effects, please contact the **Chemotherapy Village** on **020 7188 6452** (Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 6.30pm) or the **acute oncology assessment unit** on **020 7188 3754** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 6pm).

Out of hours, please contact the hospital switchboard on **020 7188 7188** and ask the telephone operator to bleep the oncology registrar on call. Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals offer a range of cancer-related information leaflets for patients and carers, available at [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/cancer-leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/cancer-leaflets). For information leaflets on other conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit



**Dimbleby Cancer Care** provides cancer support services for Guy's and St Thomas'. We have a drop-in information area staffed by specialist nurses and offer complementary therapies, psychological support and benefits advice for patients and carers.

Dimbleby Cancer Care is located in the Welcome Village of the Cancer Centre at Guy's. **t:** 020 7188 5918 **e:** [DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:DimblebyCancerCare@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the clinical nurse specialist or other member of staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language and Accessible Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111

## NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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