

Patient Information

Breast Cancer

Drugs: Everolimus and Exemestane

The aim of this leaflet is to help to inform you, and those that are close to you, about the side effects that may occur with this treatment.

Your treatment	
Drug	How is it taken?
Everolimus (<i>ever-oh-li-mus</i>)	Swallow tablet whole ONCE a day in the morning with a glass of water, on an empty stomach, 30 minutes before food or 2 hours after food. If you are unable to swallow the tablet it may dissolved in a small amount of water and then the glass rinsed with the same amount of water and this swallowed. If you forget to take a tablet and it is more than 6 hours after you normally take it, skip the tablet and take your next tablet the time it is next due. If you forget to take a tablet and it is less than 6 hours after you normally take it, you may still take the tablet. Then go back taking your tablet as you normally would. Do not take a double dose to make up for the dose that you missed.
Exemestane (<i>ex-e-mess-tain</i>)	Swallow tablet whole ONCE a day with or after food. If you forget to take a tablet, take your normal dose the next time it is due.

- this treatment is continuous. Your doctor will advise you how long to take the tablets for.
- you will need to have a blood test before each clinic visit or once a month
- tell your doctor
 - if you have a wound that has not healed
 - if you are planning to have surgery
 - if you have had, or have a family history of blood clots or osteoporosis

Important Information

If you:

- become unwell
- feel short of breath
- develop chills, shivers or shakes
- develop a temperature of 38°C or above
- develop chest pain
- notice pain or swelling in your legs or arms

Go to your nearest hospital emergency department immediately

Let your doctor know if you develop :-

- a constant cough or unexplained breathing problems
- any signs of an infection
- mouth ulcers

This medication can: -

- increase your blood sugar levels. This will need to be monitored regularly. If you have diabetes your diabetic medication may need to be adjusted. Speak to your diabetes advisor
- increase your cholesterol levels. Your cholesterol levels should be monitored as advised by your doctor

If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment and the side effects, please contact your treating team

Daytime contact.....

After hours contact.....

Side Effects

Below is a list of some of the possible side effects of this treatment and when they are likely to occur. This is a guide only. Remember most of these side effects are temporary and can be managed. Some people have few side effects while others might have many, everyone is different. If you are unsure about any of your symptoms, contact your doctor or nurse.

Immediate (onset hours to days)

Nausea and Vomiting

Feeling sick and vomiting can occur. Take your medicine as told to you by your doctor even if you do not feel sick. If you feel sick and vomit tell your doctor or nurse. If you continue to vomit or feel light-headed go to your nearest hospital emergency department without delay. For more information ask for the **Managing Nausea and Vomiting fact sheet**.

Headache

A mild headache can occur with this treatment. This can be treated with paracetamol tablets. If you develop a severe headache, go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

Early (onset days to weeks)

Increased Risk of Infection

A side effect of this treatment is a low white blood cell count, particularly affecting the type of white blood cell called neutrophils. A low neutrophil count is called neutropenia. Neutrophils are the type of white blood cell that fights infection. The lower your neutrophil count drops, the greater the risk of you developing an infection.

While your neutrophil count is low, you are at increased risk of infection. Such infections can come from bacteria (germs) that we normally carry on our skin or in our bowel. As this treatment can cause neutropenia, it is important that you monitor yourself for signs of infection and check your temperature if you are unwell.

Your blood count will be checked by your doctor at different times before and during your treatments. If your neutrophil count has not returned to normal, your doctor may delay your next treatment and/or reduce the doses of the drugs.

If you develop a fever of 38°C or higher, have shivers, shakes or feel unwell, go to your nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance. Do not delay as this is life-threatening.

For more information ask for the **Patient Information Sheet - Neutropenia and Infection**

Low platelets and Increased Risk of Bleeding

This treatment may lower the platelet count in your blood. Platelets help your blood to clot, and when low, increase the risk of bleeding and bruising. So, if you have bleeding or bruising, tell your doctor or nurse at your next appointment; however, if you have uncontrolled bleeding, go to your nearest emergency department. If your platelet count is low, you may require a platelet transfusion.

Sore Mouth

Soreness of the mouth and sometimes mouth ulcers are possible side effects of this treatment, so it is important that you care for your mouth. Rinse your mouth after each meal and before going to bed with salty water or sodium bicarbonate mouthwash. To make the mouthwash, dissolve 1/2 teaspoon of salt OR 1 teaspoon of sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) in a glass of warm water (approximately 200 mL). Clean your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush. If you normally floss continue to do so. Tell your doctor or nurse if you develop a sore mouth, pain on swallowing or a white coating on your tongue.

Loss of Appetite

You may not feel like eating. Try to eat small meals or snacks throughout the day instead of three large meals. If you are concerned about your food intake or are losing weight ask to speak to a dietitian.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea can occur with this treatment and may happen at any time. This can usually be managed by ensuring you have adequate fluid intake and taking loperamide (Gastrostop®) or other anti-diarrhoeal medication as required. You should, however, report what happened to your doctor or nurse at the next appointment. If your diarrhoea is not controlled and you

Breast Metastatic Everolimus and Exemestane

have more than 5 loose bowel motions per day, and especially if you feel light-headed or dizzy, you should go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

Feeling Tired

Fatigue is common. If you do feel tired, you may need to limit your activities and concentrate on what is most important to you. However, regular exercise each day, along with plenty of rest, has been shown to help improve fatigue.

Hot Flashes

Hot flashes and sweating are common. These can often be managed by simple measures such as dressing in layers, using a fan and avoiding food and drink that you notice worsen the symptoms such as alcohol and spicy foods. If you are concerned, talk to your doctor or nurse about other ways these symptoms can be managed.

High Blood Sugar Level

High blood sugar levels can cause symptoms such as feeling thirsty or having to empty your bladder more often. If you are a diabetic you will need to have your blood sugar levels monitored closely and you may need to have your diabetes medication increased. If you develop symptoms or feel unwell tell your doctor.

High Blood Cholesterol Level

A rise in your blood cholesterol levels can occur. Your cholesterol levels should be checked during treatment by your GP. If your levels are high you may need medication to lower your cholesterol levels.

Skin Rash

Skin rash is common. Keep your skin moisturised with a gentle non perfumed moisturising cream e.g. sorbolene or aqueous cream. Do not scratch your skin. Always protect yourself from the sun, wear a hat, sunglasses, and use a broad spectrum SPF30+ sunscreen. Talk to your doctor about treatment options.

Swelling of hands and feet

This treatment can cause extra fluid to build up in your body. Tell your doctor if you if you gain weight over a short period, have swelling in your hands and feet.

Breathing Problems

Changes to how your lungs work can happen. If you develop changes to your breathing or a cough tell your doctor. If you become short of breath or have chest pain go to your nearest hospital emergency department. **Do not delay.**

Liver problems

Yellowing of your skin and eyes may occur. It is caused by the drugs affecting your liver. You will have regular blood tests to check your liver function. If you notice your urine is a dark colour or the whites of your eyes look yellow or you experience pain in your stomach, tell your doctor or nurse.

Impaired Kidney Function

Treatment can cause changes to how your kidneys work. You may be given extra fluids with your treatment and may be advised to drink more fluids for a period of time by your treating team. You will also need to have regular blood tests to check your kidney function. If you notice you are not passing as much urine as normal or the colour has changed, inform your treating team.

Late (onset weeks to months)

Low Red Blood Cell Count

This treatment can cause anaemia (a low red blood cell count) which may cause you to feel more tired than usual. You may feel light-headed, dizzy and appear pale. Tell your doctor or nurse if you have these symptoms as you may require a blood

transfusion.

Painful Stiff Joints

You may develop some joint pain whilst on this treatment. Your doctor will advise you on things you can do to reduce joint pain and may also prescribe pain medication or anti-inflammatories to help manage this.

Swelling around the eyes

Swelling of the eyelids can occur with this treatment. If you notice any swelling around your eyes, have frequent discharge from your eyes or notice any change in your vision, please let your doctor or nurse know.

Changes in your mood

This treatment can affect your mood. You may find yourself more emotional than usual and experience mood swings, become tearful or angry. If you notice any of these symptoms, let your doctor or nurse know.

Frequently asked Questions

Will treatment affect my sex life?

The desire to have sex may decrease as a result of the treatment or its side effects. It may help to discuss your worries with your partner and/or doctor or nurse.

Is it safe to take medicines, vitamins and/or herbal preparations during my treatment?

Before starting any medicines, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, natural or herbal therapies, tell your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. Some of these may interact with your treatment. These include:

- antibiotics such as rifampicin, rifabutin, clarithromycin and erythromycin
- antifungals such as ketoconazole, voriconazole, fluconazole and itraconazole
- medicines for high blood pressure or heart problems such as diltiazem and verapamil
- antiepileptics such as carbamazepine, phenobarbitone and phenytoin
- St John's wort
- drugs used to stop the body from rejecting organ transplants such as cyclosporin

Do **not** stop taking any prescribed medicines (including low dose aspirin) without first speaking to your doctor.

What can I take for a headache or mild pain?

Paracetamol is safe to take if you have a headache or other mild aches and pains. It is recommended that you avoid taking aspirin, ibuprofen and other anti-inflammatory type medications for pain while you are having treatment. If these medications have been prescribed by your doctor, do not stop taking them without first speaking with your doctor.

Should I be on a special diet while having treatment?

While you are receiving this treatment it is important that you try and maintain a healthy diet. There are some foods that may cause food-borne illnesses in high risk individuals and should be avoided. For further information on foods to avoid and food hygiene please ask for a copy of the Listeria and Food brochure. If you have any concerns about recent weight loss or weight gain or questions about your diet, please ask to speak to a dietitian.

Can I still drink alcohol?

It is fine to drink 1 to 2 standard drinks a day with most cancer treatments. In some cases alcohol can interfere with the way some drugs work. Your doctors and nurses giving the treatment will be able to give you specific advice about whether drinking alcohol is safe with your treatment.

Can I have a vaccination?

Vaccinations such as flu and tetanus are safe to receive while you are having treatment. Live vaccines (e.g. BCG, MMR, zoster and varicella vaccines) however, should be postponed until at least 6 months after treatment. If in doubt, check with your doctor before having any vaccinations.

Your household contacts should be fully vaccinated, including having live vaccines according to the current vaccination schedule. Extra care needs to be taken with hand washing and careful disposal of soiled nappies for infants who have recently

received the rotavirus vaccine.

Useful links and resources

Telephone support

- Call Cancer Council on 13 11 20 for cancer information and support

Breast cancer information

- Australian Lymphology Association – www.lymphoedema.org.au
- Australasian Menopause Society – www.menopause.org.au
- Breast Cancer Network Australia – www.bcna.org.au
- National Breast Cancer Foundation – www.nbcf.org.au

General cancer information and support

- Beyond blue – www.beyondblue.org.au
- Cancer Australia – www.canceraustralia.gov.au
- Cancer Council Australia – www.cancer.org.au
- Cancer Voices Australia – www.cancervoicesaustralia.org
- Canteen – www.canteen.org.au
- Carers Australia – www.carersaustralia.com.au
- eviQ Cancer Treatments Online: Patients and carers homepage – www.eviq.org.au/Category/tabid/65/categoryid/64/Default.aspx
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand: Listeria & Food Safety – www.foodstandards.gov.au/publications/pages/listeriabrochuretext.aspx
- Look Good Feel Better – www.lgfb.org.au
- RedKite – www.redkite.org.au

Quit smoking information and support

Quitting smoking is helpful even after you have been diagnosed with cancer. The following resources provide useful information and support to help you quit smoking. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about any other questions you may have.

- Call Quitline on 13 QUIT (13 78 48)
- iCanQuit – www.iCanQuit.com.au
- Quitnow – www.quitnow.gov.au

Disclaimer: This document reflects what is currently regarded as safe practice. However, as in any patient's situation there may be factors which cannot be covered by a single set of guidelines. This document does not replace the need for the application of medical judgment to each individual case. Some of the side effects from cancer treatments may only become evident after a long period of time, but many of these can be avoided with careful monitoring. Rarely, some drugs can increase your chance of developing a second cancer. Generally, the benefits of your treatment should outweigh the risks. Your doctor will discuss the specific risks of your treatment with you. Contact your cancer clinic staff or doctor if you feel your symptoms are getting worse or you are not able to manage them.

The currency of this information is guaranteed only up until the date of printing, for any updates please check www.eviq.org.au

- 07 Mar 2016