

Patient information - Breast cancer metastatic - Trastuzumab emtansine

Patient's name:

Your treatment

The treatment schedule below explains how the drug for this treatment is given.


Trastuzumab emtansine

This treatment cycle is repeated every 21 days. Your doctor will advise you of the number of treatments you will have.

Day	Treatment	How it is given	How long it takes
1	Trastuzumab emtansine (<i>tras-TOOZ-ue-mab Em-taan-zine</i>)	By a drip into a vein	About 1.5 hours for the first infusion (loading dose). If the loading dose is well tolerated, subsequent infusions may take about 30 minutes.

When to get help

Anticancer drugs (drugs used to treat cancer) can sometimes cause serious problems. It is important to get medical help immediately if you become unwell.

 IMMEDIATELY go to your nearest hospital Emergency Department, or contact your doctor or nurse if you have any of the following at any time:	Emergency contact details Ask your doctor or nurse from your treating team who to contact if you have a problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• a temperature of 38°C or higher• chills, sweats, shivers or shakes• shortness of breath• uncontrolled vomiting or diarrhoea• pain, tingling or discomfort in your chest or arms• you become unwell.	Daytime:..... Night/weekend:..... Other instructions:.....

During your treatment immediately tell the doctor or nurse looking after you if you get any of the following problems:

- leaking from the area where the drugs are being given
- pain, stinging, swelling or redness in the area where the drugs are being given or at any injection sites
- a skin rash, itching, feeling short of breath, wheezing, fever, shivers, or feeling dizzy or unwell in any way (allergic reaction).

Other information about your treatment

Changes to your dose or treatment delays

Sometimes a treatment may be started at a lower dose or the dose needs to be changed during treatment. There may also be times when your treatment is delayed. This can happen if your doctor thinks you are likely to have severe side effects, if you get

severe side effects, if your blood counts are affected and causing delays in treatment, or if you are finding it hard to cope with the treatment. This is called a dose reduction, dose change or treatment delay. Your doctor will explain if you need any changes or delays to your treatment and the reason why.

Blood tests and monitoring

Anticancer drugs can reduce the number of blood cells in your body. You will need to have regular blood tests to check that your blood cell count has returned to normal. If your blood count is low your treatment may be delayed until it has returned to normal. Your doctor or nurse will tell you when to have these blood tests.

Other medications given during this treatment

- **Anti-sickness (anti-nausea) medication:** you may be given some anti-sickness medication. Make sure you take this medication as your doctor or nurse tells you, even if you don't feel sick. This can help to prevent the sickness starting.

Side effects

Cancer treatments can cause damage to normal cells in your body, which can cause side effects. Everyone gets different side effects, and some people will have more problems than others.

The table below shows some of the side effects you may get with this treatment. You are unlikely to get all of those listed and you may also get some side effects that have not been listed.

Tell your doctor or nurse about any side effects that worry you. Follow the instructions below and those given to you by your doctor or nurse.

Immediate (onset hours to days)	
Pain or swelling at injection site (extravasation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This treatment can cause serious injury if it leaks from the area where it is going into the vein. • This can cause pain, stinging, swelling or redness at or near the site where the drug enters the vein. • If not treated correctly, you may get blistering and ulceration. • Tell your doctor or nurse immediately if you get any of the symptoms listed above during or after treatment.
Allergic reaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allergic reactions are uncommon but can be life threatening. • If you feel unwell during the infusion or shortly after it, or: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ get a fever, shivers or shakes ◦ feel dizzy, faint, confused or anxious ◦ start wheezing or have difficulty breathing ◦ have a rash, itch or redness of the face <p><u>While you are in hospital:</u> Tell your doctor or nurse immediately.</p> <p><u>After you leave:</u> Contact your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department.</p>
Nausea and vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may feel sick (nausea) or be sick (vomit). • Take your anti-sickness medication as directed even if you don't feel sick. • Drink plenty of fluids (unless you are fluid restricted). • Eat small meals more frequently. • Try food that does not require much preparation. • Try bland foods like dry biscuits or toast. • Gentle exercise may help with nausea. • Ask your doctor or nurse for eviQ patient information - Nausea and vomiting during cancer treatment. • Tell your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department if you have uncontrolled vomiting or feel dizzy or light-headed.
Taste and smell changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may find that food loses its taste or tastes different. • These changes are likely to go away with time. • Do your mouth care regularly. • Chew on sugar-free gum or eat sugar-free mints. • Add flavour to your food with sauces and herbs. • Ask your doctor or nurse for eviQ patient information - Taste and smell changes during cancer treatment.
Early (onset days to weeks)	

Infection risk (neutropenia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This treatment lowers the amount of white blood cells in your body. The type of white blood cells that help to fight infection are called neutrophils. Having low level of neutrophils is called neutropenia. If you have neutropenia, you are at greater risk of getting an infection. It also means that your body can't fight infections as well as usual. This is a serious side effect, and can be life threatening. • Wash your hands often. • Keep a thermometer at home and take your temperature regularly, and if you feel unwell. • Do your mouth care regularly. • Inspect your central line site (if you have one) daily for any redness, pus or swelling. • Limit contact with people who are sick. • Learn how to recognise the signs of infection. • Ask your doctor or nurse for eviQ patient information - Infection during cancer treatment. • Tell your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department if you get any of the following signs or symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ a temperature of 38°C or higher ◦ chills, shivers, sweats or shakes ◦ a sore throat or cough ◦ uncontrolled diarrhoea ◦ shortness of breath ◦ a fast heartbeat ◦ become unwell even without a temperature.
Low platelets (thrombocytopenia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This treatment lowers the amount of platelets in your blood. Platelets help your blood to clot. When they are low, you are at an increased risk of bleeding and bruising. • Try not to bruise or cut yourself. • Avoid contact sport or vigorous exercise. • Clear your nose by blowing gently. • Avoid constipation. • Brush your teeth with a soft toothbrush. • Don't take aspirin, ibuprofen or other similar anti-inflammatory medications unless your doctor tells you to. • Tell your doctor or nurse if you have any bruising or bleeding. • Tell your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to your nearest hospital Emergency Department if you have any uncontrolled bleeding.
Bleeding (haemorrhage)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell your doctor or nurse if you have a wound that does not heal. • Tell your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department if you get any of the following signs or symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ unusual bleeding or bruising ◦ bright red or black, tarry bowel motions (stools, poo) ◦ stomach pain ◦ slurred speech ◦ shortness of breath ◦ a fast heartbeat.

Mouth pain and soreness (mucositis)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> bleeding gums mouth ulcers a white coating on your tongue pain in the mouth or throat difficulty eating or swallowing. Avoid spicy, acidic or crunchy foods and very hot or cold food and drinks. Try bland and soft foods. Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush after each meal and at bedtime. If you normally floss continue to do so. Rinse your mouth after you eat and brush your teeth, using either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1/4 teaspoon of salt in 1 cup of warm water, or 1/4 teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda in 1 cup of warm water Ask your doctor or nurse for eviQ patient information - Mouth problems during cancer treatment. Tell your doctor or nurse if you get any of the symptoms listed above.
Diarrhoea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may get bowel motions (stools, poo) that are more frequent or more liquid. You may also get bloating, cramping or pain. Take your antidiarrhoeal medication as directed by your doctor. Drink plenty of fluids (unless you are fluid restricted). Eat and drink small amounts more often. Avoid spicy foods, dairy products, high fibre foods, and coffee. Ask your doctor or nurse for eviQ patient information - Diarrhoea during cancer treatment. Tell your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to your nearest hospital Emergency Department if your diarrhoea is not controlled, you have 4 or more loose bowel motions per day, and if you feel dizzy or light-headed.
Tiredness and lack of energy (fatigue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may feel very tired, have no energy, sleep a lot, and not be able to do normal activities or things you enjoy. Do not drive or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. Nap for short periods (only 1 hour at a time) Prioritise your tasks to ensure the best use of your energy. Eat a well balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids (unless you are fluid restricted). Try some gentle exercise daily. Allow your friends and family to help. Tell your doctor or nurse if you get any of the symptoms listed above.
Joint and muscle pain and stiffness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may get muscle, joint or general body pain and stiffness. Applying a heat pack to affected areas may help. Talk to your doctor or nurse about other ways to manage these symptoms. You may need medication to help with any pain.
Low blood potassium levels (hypokalaemia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be found from your routine blood tests and treated by your doctor. If it is severe you may get: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> muscle cramps or twitches constipation confusion an irregular heartbeat. Tell your doctor or nurse as soon as possible if you get any of the signs or symptoms listed above.

Liver problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may get: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ yellowing of your skin or eyes ◦ itchy skin ◦ pain or tenderness in your stomach ◦ nausea and vomiting ◦ loss of appetite You will have regular blood tests to check how well your liver is working. Tell your doctor or nurse as soon as possible if you notice that your urine is a dark colour, the whites of your eyes look yellow, or if you have stomach pain.
Nose bleeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your nose starts to bleed gently apply pressure on the soft part of nostrils below the bridge of the nose for at least 10 minutes. It may help to put a cold pack over your forehead or the bridge of the nose. Tell your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department if your nose will not stop bleeding.
Hand-foot syndrome (palmar-plantar erythrodysesthesia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The palms of your hands and soles of your feet may become: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ red and hot ◦ swollen ◦ painful and tender ◦ blistered. The skin in the area may also peel. Moisturise your hands and feet daily with sorbolene or aqueous cream. Keep your hands and feet clean and dry. Avoid hot water, instead use lukewarm water to bathe. Avoid direct sunlight. Avoid unnecessary walking, jogging or exercise. Wear cotton socks and avoid tight-fitting shoes. Tell your doctor or nurse as soon as possible if you notice any skin changes on your hands or feet.
Skin rash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may get a red, bumpy rash and dry, itchy skin. Moisturise your skin with a gentle non-perfumed moisturising cream like sorbolene or aqueous cream. Do not scratch your skin. Protect your skin from the sun by wearing sun-protective clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher. Talk to your doctor or nurse about other ways to manage your skin rash.
Nerve damage (peripheral neuropathy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may notice a change in the sensations in your hands and feet, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ tingling or pins and needles ◦ numbness or loss of feeling ◦ pain. You may find it difficult to do everyday activities, such as doing up buttons or picking up small objects. Test water temperature with your elbow when bathing to avoid burns. Use rubber gloves, pot holders and oven mitts in the kitchen. Wear rubber shoes or boots when working in the garden or garage. Keep rooms well lit and uncluttered. Ask your doctor or nurse for eviQ patient information – Nerve problems during cancer treatment. Tell your doctor or nurse if you get any of the symptoms listed above.

Eye problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may get: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> eye pain red, sore or swollen eyes blurred vision watery or gritty eyes changes in your eyesight sensitivity to sunlight. Protect your eyes from the weather (sun and wind) by wearing sunglasses, especially if you have lost your eyelashes. Tell your doctor or nurse if you get any of the symptoms listed above. Eye drops may help with your symptoms.
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Late (onset weeks to months)	
Low red blood cells (anaemia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may feel dizzy, light-headed, tired and appear more pale than usual. Tell your doctor or nurse if you have any of these signs or symptoms. You might need a blood transfusion. Tell your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department if you have any chest pain, trouble breathing, or feel like your heart is racing.
Lung problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lung problems are rare, but can be serious. They may occur throughout treatment or after the completion of treatment. You may get: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shortness of breath fever dry cough wheezing fast heartbeat chest pain. Your doctor will monitor how well your lungs are working during your treatment. Tell your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department if you have chest pain or become short of breath.

Delayed (onset months to years)	
Heart problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may get: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> chest pain or tightness shortness of breath swelling of your ankles an abnormal heartbeat. Heart problems can occur months to years after treatment. Tell your doctor if you have a history of heart problems or high blood pressure. Before or during treatment, you may be asked to have a test to see how well your heart is working. Tell your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department if you get any of the symptoms listed above.

General advice for people having cancer treatment

Chemotherapy safety

- Learn how to keep you and your family safe while you are having anticancer drugs.
- See our patient information sheet - [Chemotherapy safety at home](#).

Blood clot risk

- Cancer and anticancer drugs can increase the risk of a blood clot (thrombosis).
- Tell your doctor if you have a family history of blood clots.

- A blood clot can cause pain, redness, swelling in your arms or legs, shortness of breath or chest pain.
- If you have any of these symptoms go to your nearest hospital Emergency Department.

Medications and vaccinations

- Before you start treatment, tell your doctor about any medications you are taking, including vitamins or herbal supplements.
- Don't stop or start any medications during treatment without talking to your doctor and pharmacist first.
- 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. However, if these medications have been prescribed by your doctor, do not stop taking them without speaking with your doctor.
- Vaccinations such as flu and tetanus vaccines are safe to receive while having treatment. Do not have any live vaccines during your treatment or for 6 months after it finishes. If you are unsure, check with your doctor before you have any vaccinations.
- People you live with 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.

Other medical and dental treatment

- If you go to hospital or any other medical appointment (including dental appointments), always tell the person treating you that you are receiving anticancer drugs.
- Before you have any dental treatment, talk to your doctor.

Diet

- While you are receiving this treatment it is important that you try to maintain a healthy diet.
- Grapefruit and grapefruit juice can interact with your medication and should be avoided while you are on this treatment.
- Speak to your doctor or nurse about whether drinking alcohol is safe with your treatment.
- If you have any concerns about recent weight loss or weight gain or questions about your diet, ask to speak to a dietitian.

Fertility

- Some cancer treatments can reduce your fertility. This can make it difficult or impossible to get pregnant or father a child.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse before you start any treatment. Depending on your situation there may be fertility sparing options available to you and/or your partner, discuss these with your doctor or nurse.

Pregnancy and breastfeeding

- Some cancer treatments can be dangerous to unborn babies. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you think there is any chance that you could be pregnant.
- Do not try to get pregnant or father a child during this treatment. Ask your doctor or nurse about what type of contraception you should use.
- Do not breastfeed if you are on this treatment as anticancer drugs can also pass into breast milk.

Sex life and sexuality

- The desire to have sex may decrease as a result of this treatment or its side effects.
- Your emotions and the way you feel about yourself may also be affected by this treatment.
- It may help to discuss your concerns with your partner and doctor or nurse.

For more information about cancer treatment, side effects and side effect management see our [Patient and carers](#) section.

Where to get more information

Telephone support

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

Breast cancer information

- Australasian Lymphology Association – lymphoedema.org.au
- Australasian Menopause Society – menopause.org.au
- Breast Cancer Network Australia – bcna.org.au
- National Breast Cancer Foundation – nbcf.org.au
- YWCA Encore breast cancer exercise program – ywcaencore.org.au

General cancer information and support

- Beyondblue – beyondblue.org.au
- Cancer Australia – canceraustralia.gov.au
- Cancer Council Australia – cancer.org.au
- Cancer Voices Australia – cancervoicesaustralia.org
- CanTeen – canteen.org.au
- Carers Australia – carersaustralia.com.au
- eviQ Cancer Treatments Online – eviQ.org.au
- Look Good Feel Better – lgfb.org.au
- Redkite – 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 – iCanQuit.com.au
- Quitnow – quitnow.gov.au

Additional notes:

This document is a guide only and cannot cover every possible situation. The health professionals caring for you should always consider your individual situation when making decisions about your care. Contact your cancer clinic staff or doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your treatment, or you are having problems coping with side effects. Use of this document is subject to eviQ's disclaimer available at www.eviQ.org.au

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