

Patient information - Breast cancer adjuvant - D (docetaxel) (part 2 of FEC-D)

Patient's name:

Your treatment

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


D (docetaxel)

This treatment cycle is repeated every 21 days. You will have 3 cycles. This treatment is the second part of the FEC-D regimen. In the first part of the regimen you will have 3 cycles of FEC (fluorouracil, epirubicin, cyclophosphamide). Your doctor will discuss your treatment plan with you.

Day	Treatment	How it is given	How long it takes
1	Docetaxel (<i>dox-e-tax-elle</i>)	By a drip into a vein	About 1.5 hours

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.
- **G-CSF:** you may be given injection(s) of a drug called G-CSF (also called filgrastim, lenograstim, lipegfilgrastim or pegfilgrastim) under your skin. This helps to boost your white blood cell count. Your white blood cells help to fight infection. Lipegfilgrastim and pegfilgrastim are given once. Filgrastim and lenograstim are given for several days until your white blood cells recover. Your doctor will decide if you need this medication.
- **Docetaxel premedication:** before your treatment with docetaxel you may need to take a tablet called a premedication to help prevent you from having a reaction to docetaxel. A steroid tablet called dexamethasone may be used and should be taken with or after food as directed. The following table may be used to remind you when to take your premedication. Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to fill it out for you.

Tablet	Dose	When to take

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have not taken your premedications before you have your treatment.

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)	
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.
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.

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.
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.
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.

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.
Hand-foot syndrome (palmar-plantar erythrodysaesthesia)	<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.
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.
Extra fluid in the body (fluid retention)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may gain weight over a short amount of time. • Your hands and feet may become swollen, appear red or feel hot and uncomfortable. • These symptoms are caused by the drug docetaxel. • Wear loose clothing and shoes that are not too tight. • Try not to stand up or walk around too much at one time. • If your ankles or legs get swollen, try raising them. • Make sure that any cuts or areas of broken skin are treated as soon as possible. • Tell your doctor or nurse as soon as possible if you get any of the symptoms listed above. • Tell your doctor or nurse immediately, or go to the nearest hospital Emergency Department if you become short of breath.

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.
Nail changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your nails may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> grow more slowly become darker develop ridges or white lines become brittle and flaky In some cases, you may lose your nails completely. Keep your nails clean and short. Avoid things like biting your fingernails, getting a manicure, pedicure or false nails. Wear gloves when you wash the dishes, work in the garden, or clean the house.
Hair thinning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your hair may become dry and may break easily. You may lose some of your hair. Use a gentle shampoo and a soft hairbrush. Take care with hair products like hairspray, hair dye, bleaches and perms. Protect your scalp from the cold with a hat or scarf. Protect your scalp from the sun with a hat and sunscreen of SPF 30 or higher. Ask your doctor or nurse about the Look Good Feel Better program (www.lgfb.org.au)

Delayed (onset months to years)	
Menopausal symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may get: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> hot flushes or night sweats mood changes vaginal dryness irregular or no periods. You may also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> have trouble sleeping find sex painful or lose interest in sex These symptoms may go away after treatment, or the menopause may be permanent. If you have sex you should use contraception as there is still a risk of pregnancy. Talk to your doctor about what form of contraception is right for you. Talk to your doctor or nurse about ways to manage these symptoms.

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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<https://www.eviq.org.au/pi/135>

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