

Pembrolizumab-Cis-Fluorouracil

for Head and neck cancer

Patient information

Regimen schedule

Next course of treatment, day 22																					
Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Pembrolizumab	X																				
Cisplatin	X																				
Fluorouracil Bårbar infusionspump (4 dygn)	→	→	→	→	*																

* Pumpen kopplas bort.

About your treatment

Pembrolizumab is an antibody that activates your immune system to attack the cancer cells. Cisplatin and fluorouracil are cytostatic drugs.

Each course is 21 days. You get an IV on day 1. You will also receive a portable infusion pump that doses fluorouracil for 4 days at home. After that, there is a break of 17 days, before a new course starts. During treatment, your blood tests and any side effects will be monitored.

Portable infusion pump

Homepump or Intermate are portable, single-use infusion pumps. The pump is driven by the pressure created when it is filled with a solution. The pump is usually stored in a waist bag. Check that the hose is not pinched. Avoid getting the pump wet. If the pump falls to the floor, it should be able to withstand this. It may be a good idea to check the pump daily and check if it is not free.

Side effects - symptoms and tips

The side effects we list here are the most common and important. They can vary greatly from person to person, and even from time to time. The side effects may require a break in treatment. Tell your doctor or nurse if you have any side effects. Often the symptoms can be prevented or alleviated.

Side effects may come late, several months after treatment has ended. Contact your doctor anyway!

Problems with stomach and intestines

Diarrhoea and nausea are common, but you may also become constipated.

You can also get inflammation of the intestines (colitis). It can cause severe diarrhoea, stomach pain, blood in your stools or dark and smelly stools.

Skin problems

Dry skin and rashes with or without itching are common. Some skin conditions can be made worse by treatment, such as psoriasis and rosacea. You may also get inflammation of the skin (dermatitis), which in rare cases can lead to a severe skin reaction with watery sores.

Tip for mild itching: When washing your skin, be gentle and use unscented soap or shower oil. Lubricate with moisturiser.

Dry cough and difficulty breathing

New symptoms of dry cough, shortness of breath and difficulty breathing may be due to a special inflammation of the lungs and airways (pneumonitis).

Pain in muscles and joints

Pain in muscles and joints is common. Swelling around the ankles is also common.

Infection susceptibility

You will be susceptible to infection after treatment. This is because the level of white blood cells drops. Before each treatment, blood samples are taken to see if the blood cells have recovered. If the values are too low, the treatment must be postponed.

Tips: Try to avoid close contact with people who have a cold or stomach illness, for example. Wash your hands often with soap and water. Hand sanitizer can be useful.

Hormone changes

You may experience headaches, fatigue, depression, hot flashes, heart palpitations, decreased sexual desire and behavioural changes. You may also experience visual disturbances, such as blurred vision and double vision, and pain behind the eyes. Symptoms may be due to inflammation of the thyroid, adrenal or pituitary glands.

Problems with mouth and mucous membranes

The mucous membranes of your nose, mouth, eyes and abdomen may be affected by your treatment. For example, you may have nosebleeds and a runny nose. In the mouth, you may experience dryness, redness, burning and sores. You can also get fungus, which turns the lining of your mouth red or gives it a white coating. Eyes may become dry and watery. The mucous membranes in the lower abdomen can also become dry.

Tip: If you have a dry mouth, use saliva stimulants available in pharmacies. Rinsing your mouth with Vichy water can prevent fungus. Be attentive to oral hygiene, and use a soft toothbrush and mild toothpaste. Be careful with floss and toothpicks. Inform your dentist of your cancer treatment when you visit. Avoid contact lenses if you have eye problems. Women can use oestrogen cream, emollient cream or oil to treat dry mucous membranes in the lower abdomen.

Sense and awareness

Your strength or sensation in your arms and legs may be reduced, but this is rare. This may be due to inflammation of the nerve pathways (peripheral neuropathy).

Consciousness may be affected in rare cases, if the inflammation affects the brain instead (encephalitis).

Eye problems

You may get red eyes with stinging and pain. You may also experience blurred vision, dry eyes and become more sensitive to light.

Tip: If your eyes sting and feel dry, use lubricating eye drops available from pharmacies.

Problems with the heart

The treatment carries a certain risk of cardiac effects. You may have symptoms such as chest pain, an unusual heart rhythm, palpitations, shortness of breath or swollen legs. ECG and/or ultrasound of the heart are sometimes included in checks on heart function.

Impact on hearing

Cisplatin can cause hearing damage. If you experience ringing in the ears or a squeak, or if you notice that your hearing is getting worse, it is important that you tell your doctor or nurse.

Contact your clinic immediately at:

Acute

- Call 112 in case of persistent acute chest pain, pressure on the chest or difficulty breathing/shortness of breath

Contact your reception immediately at:

- • Fever (temp above 38 degrees) or at a temperature below 36 degrees
- • Sudden deterioration regardless of symptoms
- • Urinary tract infection symptoms or cold symptoms before treatment
- • Severe nausea or burning in the mouth that makes it difficult for you to eat and drink
- • Nosebleeds or other bleeding you cannot stop or bruising over large parts of the body
- • Increased number of stools/diarrhea with or without stomach pain, bloody or black stools
- • New onset dry cough and shortness of breath
- • Severe itching, blisters, oozing sores and peeling skin.
- • If you or your relatives feel that you are changed, confused or that consciousness is affected.
- • Headache, unusual fatigue, pain behind the eyes and visual disturbances.

Contact your clinic before vaccination

If you need to be vaccinated, talk to your doctor or nurse beforehand.

Common advice

It is important not to get pregnant or make someone pregnant while you are being treated with cancer drugs, as the drugs can affect the foetus. Therefore, use safe contraceptives. Sometimes double protection is needed, as side effects such as diarrhoea or the direct effect of cancer drugs may mean that the contraceptive pill is not enough protection on its own.

General information about cancer

Useful information about cancer is available from both 1177 Vårdguiden and Cancerfonden:

www.1177.se

www.cancerfonden.se

Notes
