Gemcitabin-Kapecitabin

for Gastrointestinal cancer

Regimen schedule

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Gemcitabin	X							X							X						
Kapecitabin Morning dose	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kapecitabin Evening dose	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Next course of treatment, day 29

Day	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Gemcitabin							
Kapecitabin Morning dose							
Kapecitabin Evening dose							

About your treatment

Gemcitabine and capecitabine are cytostatic drugs.

Each course is 28 days. On days 1, 8 and 15, you will be given an IV. You take capecitabine as tablets starting with an evening dose on day 1 and then twice a day (morning and evening) from day 2 to 21. The last dose is taken in the morning of day 22. After that, there is a break of 6 days, before a new course starts. Your doctor or nurse will tell you how many tablets to take at a time. During treatment, your blood tests and any side effects will be monitored.

How to take the medicines

Swallow the tablets whole with water. Take the tablets 15-30 minutes after a meal. If you miss a dose or vomit, take your usual dose at the next opportunity.

Read more in the package leaflet.

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. Side effects may determine your dose or require you to stop taking the medicine.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have any side effects. Often the symptoms can be prevented or alleviated.

Nausea and taste changes

You may feel unwell from the treatment. You will therefore be given anti-nausea medication in conjunction with the treatment. The medicines may cause constipation. You can get different varieties depending on how you feel. The taste of food and drink may be altered by the treatment.

Tips: Sometimes it feels better to eat lighter food and small portions. For example, try skim milk, yoghurt, omelettes, sandwiches and hot or cold soups. Drinking a little extra between meals can reduce nausea.

Problems with stomach and intestines

Diarrhoea is common. You may also become constipated.

Tip: Drink a lot, a few glasses more than usual per day. If you have diarrhoea, avoid fatty, spicy and high-fibre foods. If you're constipated, try high-fibre foods and exercise. Talk to your doctor if you get diarrhoea or constipation - you may need medication.

Problems with hands and feet

It is common to get redness, dry flaky skin and swelling on the hands and soles of the feet. It can develop into blisters, cracks and sores. You may also get sore, tingling and numbness in your hands and feet. Contact your doctor immediately if you experience these symptoms.

Tip: Avoid exposing hands and feet to high heat, such as showering or washing dishes with very hot water. Protect your hands with gloves, for example when gardening. Also avoid exposing your hands and feet to vibration or abrasion, such as when using a drill for hours or running for miles.

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.

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.

Tips: 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. For dry mucous membranes in the lower abdomen, vaginal gel, vagitories and emollient cream (without oestrogen) can be used.

Problems with skin, hair and nails

Skin often becomes dry and more sensitive to the sun. You may also lose hair or your hair may change texture. Nails can become brittle.

Tip: When washing your skin, be gentle and use mild soap. Lubricate often with moisturiser. Wear covering clothing to protect against the sun, and sunscreen on parts of your body that you can't cover. Wear gloves for work that is dirty or abrasive for your hands. If your nails are bothering you, you can use nail polish and brush your cuticles with oil or apply a moisturiser.

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.

Contact your clinic immediately at:

- fever above 38 degrees, or temperature below 36 degrees
- severe diarrhoea, or diarrhoea combined with fever
- chest pain or difficulty breathing
- nosebleeds or other bleeding that you can’t stop
- skin rash on most of the body, or skin rash with pain
- sudden deterioration, regardless of symptoms
- chest pain or difficulty breathing, call 112

Common advice

Cancer drugs are usually excreted in the urine up to 7 days after treatment. Therefore, you should avoid splashing urine. Sit down when you pee. When finished, close the toilet lid and flush 2 times. 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. If you are a man, use a condom during sexual intercourse within 72 hours of treatment, as cytostatic drugs are also excreted through the seminal fluid.

General information about cancer

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

www.1177.se

www.cancerfonden.se