Pembro-FOLFOX

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
Pembrolizumab	X																				
Oxaliplatin	X														X						
Kalciumfolinat (vattenfritt)	X														X						
Fluorouracil	X														X						
Fluorouracil Bärbar infusionspump (46 tim.)	→	→	*												→	→	*				

Next course of treatment, day 43

Day	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42
Pembrolizumab																					
Oxaliplatin								X													
Kalciumfolinat (vattenfritt)								X													
Fluorouracil								X													
Fluorouracil Bärbar infusionspump (46 tim.)								→	→	*											

* Pumpen kopplas bort.

About your treatment

Pembrolizumab is an antibody that activates your immune system to attack cancer cells. FOLFOX is an abbreviation of fluorouracil and oxaliplatin, both of which are cytostatic drugs. It also contains calcium folinate, a folic acid that increases the effect of fluorouracil.

Each course is 14 days. On day 1, you will receive an IV drip and a portable infusion pump that will dose fluorouracil for 2 days at home. After that, there is a break of 12 days, before a new course starts. During treatment, your blood tests and any side effects will be monitored.

Immunotherapy

When receiving immunotherapy (antibodies that activate your immune system), there is a risk of serious side effects.

The side effects that can occur are autoimmune reactions/inflammation in the body's various organs. The side effects are often mild and transient but can become serious. It is important that the side effects are detected early so that they can be followed up and treated if necessary.

The side effects can occur at any time during treatment but also several months after treatment has ended.

Signs of side effects can also be detected through blood tests. You may provide blood tests during treatment and after treatment has ended.

It is important that you contact your clinic if you experience any of the following symptoms:

• New or changed dry cough and shortness of breath. May be a side effect in the lungs, pneumonitis

• Increased number of stools, new diarrhea possibly accompanied by stomach pain, blood in the stool or black stools. May be a side effect in the intestines, colitis

• Dark-colored urine, foamy urine or very cloudy urine. May be a side effect in the kidneys, nephritis

• Headache, unusually tiredness and weakness, impaired consciousness, pain behind the eyes, visual disturbances, confusion and new depression. May be a side effect in hormone-producing glands such as the thyroid or pituitary gland

• Redness and rash on the skin, often with itching. Wetting sores and blistering are a serious sign. May be a side effect in the skin, dermatitis

• New pain, swelling and stiffness in muscles and joints, May be myositis and arthritis

• Impaired strength and sensation in the arms and legs. May be a side effect in the nervous system, neuritis

• Chest pain, irregular pulse and palpitations. May be signs of inflammation of the heart muscle, myocarditis

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. 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.

Fatigue

Fatigue is common in connection with cancer and its treatment. The severity of the symptoms and their duration vary from person to person. You may continue to feel tired long after treatment has ended. This type of extreme exhaustion is known as fatigue—a tiredness that does not always improve with rest or sleep. Many describe fatigue as a total lack of energy, and it can occur even without physical exertion. Your ability to remember, concentrate, and solve problems may be impaired. Fatigue is sometimes associated with feelings of resignation, stress, anxiety, and depression. Tip: Try to stay active. Physical activity often helps alleviate tiredness and fatigue. Find a balance between activity, rest, and sleep that works for you.

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.

Numbness and tingling - sensory disturbances

Oxaliplatin can cause nerve damage (peripheral neuropathy). You may therefore experience numbness and tingling in your hands and feet, and your fine motor skills may be impaired. Symptoms may be triggered by cold. The symptoms usually go away, but not completely in everyone. Tell your doctor or nurse if you have numbness or tingling in your hands and feet.

Tips: Wear gloves when it's cold outside, and to protect against the cold in the fridge and freezer.

Feeling of discomfort in the throat

During or after treatment, your throat may feel tight and it may be difficult to breathe. The feeling usually comes when you get out into the cold air or have a cold drink. Breathing may become wheezy and hoarse. Although the sensation is unpleasant, it is short-lived and will pass without treatment.

Tips: In cold weather - pull a scarf over your nose and mouth. If it occurs: breathe calmly and drink something warm.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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