Cetuximab-FOLFIRI 14 dagar

for Gastrointestinal cancer

Regimen schedule

Next course of treatment, day 15

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Cetuximab	X													
Irinotekan	X													
Kalciumfolinat (vattenfritt)	X													
Fluorouracil	X													
Fluorouracil Bärbar infusionspump (46 tim.)	→	→	*											

* Pumpen kopplas bort.

About your treatment

Cetuximab (Erbitux) is an antibody that inhibits the growth of cancer cells. FOLFIRI is an abbreviation of fluorouracil and irinotecan, 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.

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.

Problems with skin, hair and nails

You may lose hair and your hair may change texture. Your skin often becomes dry and more sensitive to the sun. Your nails may become brittle. **Tip:** When washing your skin, be gentle and use a mild soap. Apply moisturizer frequently. Wear protective clothing to protect yourself from the sun, and sunscreen on parts of your body that you cannot cover. Wear gloves when doing dirty or rough work. If you have problems with your nails, brush your cuticles with oil or apply moisturizer.

Diarrhoea

Irinotecan may cause stomach pain, diarrhoea, sweating or an increased flow of tears within 24 hours of treatment. Contact your doctor - you may need medication.

Irinotecan can also cause diarrhoea more than 24 hours after treatment. Most commonly, diarrhoea occurs after about 5 days. You should have been given information on what to do if you are affected and you need to have access to suppressive drugs.

Tips: You should drink plenty of water, such as carbonated drinks, soup or liquid substitutes available in pharmacies. If you have diarrhoea, avoid fatty, spicy and high-fibre foods.

Acne-like skin problems

You may get acne-like rashes on your face and upper body. You may also experience itching, cracking of the skin and inflammation around the nails. Talk to your nurse if you develop skin problems - you may need medication.

Tip: Apply a moisturising cream to your whole body several times a day. Use bath oil instead of soap. Avoid sunbathing. Wear a hat and full-coverage clothing. Lubricate parts of the body not covered by clothing with sunscreen that has a high SPF and UVA protection.

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 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.

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.

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

Call your clinic immediately at:

Fever (temp above 38 degrees) or at a temperature below 36 degrees

Sudden deterioration regardless of symptoms

Severe diarrhea that does not decrease with stopping drugs

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

New severe fatigue and/or muscle weakness or involuntary muscle cramps

New skin rashes over large parts of the body

Painful skin redness/rash/nail changes

Liquifying rash with yellowish crusts

Painful or inflamed eyes, sensitivity to light

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