

## Docetaxel veckovis konkomitant med strålbehandling

for Head and neck cancer

### Regimen schedule

Next course of treatment, day 8

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Docetaxel (vattenfri)	X						

### About your treatment

Docetaxel is a cytotoxic drug. Each course is 35 days. On days 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, 36 and 43 you will receive drops. The 1st course is given within 5 days from the start of radiotherapy. During the treatment, your blood samples and any side effects are monitored.

#### Radiation therapy

The treatment is combined with radiotherapy. When radiotherapy is given at the same time as chemotherapy, the effect of the treatment is enhanced. Radiation therapy is usually given daily from Monday to Friday, with breaks on holidays. You will receive information about which days you will receive radiotherapy from your nurse or doctor.

### 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. You may feel low in energy and never rested. Your memory may deteriorate, and you may find it harder to concentrate and solve problems. It can make you feel down, stressed and anxious. You may also find it difficult to socialise. Fatigue may persist for a long time after treatment.

**Tips:** Try to exercise and move around. It's the only thing known to help with fatigue.

#### Hair loss

Usually you will lose your hair 2-4 weeks after the first treatment. The hair will start to grow back about 3-4 weeks after you have finished all the cytostatic treatment. Sometimes the hair colour changes, and straight hair can become curly. But over time, the hair usually returns to its former state. Sometimes, you may even lose eyebrows and eyelashes, but they also grow back.

#### Skin and nails

Skin often becomes dry and more sensitive to the sun. Nails can become brittle.

**Tips:** When washing your skin, be gentle and use mild soap. Lubricate 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.

## **Numbness and tingling - sensory disturbances**

Docetaxel can cause nerve damage (peripheral neuropathy). As a result, you may experience numbness and tingling in your hands and feet, and your fine motor skills may be impaired. For example, you may find it difficult to press buttons or walk. 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.

Physical activity can prevent neuropathy and can relieve symptoms and improve motor skills and balance. Try to find the exercise that suits you. Cardio and strength training can be good for preventive purposes. If neuropathy has occurred, improved muscle strength, balance training and yoga can also have an effect by affecting function for the better.

## **Nausea and taste changes**

There is a risk that the treatment will make you feel unwell. If necessary, you will be given anti-nausea medication.

**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.

## **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.

## **Pain in joints and muscles**

Joint pain, muscle pain and muscle weakness similar to exercise pain or flu pain may occur 1 to 3 days after treatment

## **Swollen legs and feet**

Swollen legs and feet are common.

**Tips:**You can use support stockings. Put your feet up on a footstool or rest for a while in bed. Apply a moisturiser to protect your skin, and watch out for sores.

## 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. When finished, close the toilet lid and flush 2 times.*

## General information about cancer

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

[www.1177.se](http://www.1177.se)

[www.cancerfonden.se](http://www.cancerfonden.se)

## Notes

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