



United Family New Hope Oncology Center

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Pemetrexed (Alimta)

General information

Pemetrexed is a chemotherapy medication given IV over 10-minutes, every 3-weeks. Pemetrexed is used to treat mesothelioma (asbestos lung) and certain non-small cell lung cancers. Pemetrexed can be given alone or in combination with the chemotherapy, Cisplatin/Carboplatin (Platinol). Pemetrexed is given in combination with Cisplatin when treating mesothelioma and newly diagnosed non-small cell lung cancers. If you are being treated because your nonsmall cell lung cancer has returned, you may receive Pemetrexed alone. To decrease the chances of side effects linked to Pemetrexed, you will need to take a folic acid tablet daily, **starting 7-days before your first treatment with Pemetrexed and for 21-days after completing treatment with Pemetrexed.** Your doctor will give you a prescription for the folic acid. You will also receive a B-12 injection (vitamin B) 7-days before starting Pemetrexed. The B-12 injection will be repeated **every 9-weeks** while you are receiving Pemetrexed. The folic acid and B-12 is given to reduce the effect of Pemetrexed on your body's white blood cells. Lowering the white blood cell count can lead to fever and infections. You will have your blood counts checked frequently while you are receiving Pemetrexed. You will also be given a prescription for a medication called Decadron (dexamethasone). Decadron decreases the chance of skin reactions related to Pemetrexed. The Decadron is **taken twice a day** (after breakfast and dinner), the day before treatment and the day after your treatment. You will take one, 4-mg tablet with each dose.

Food & Drug Interactions: Review all of your current medications with your doctor and nurse. This includes prescription, non-prescription, vitamins, and herbal supplements. The use of aspirin, Motrin, Aleve, ibuprofen, Advil, Celebrex or other medications that contain aspirin should be stopped at least 7-days before starting treatment with Pemetrexed and for the time that your are being treated with Pemetrexed. This is due to the increased chance of bleeding. Talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about any side effect that bothers you or that doesn't go away.

Possible side effects

Infection, bleeding, fatigue (anemia)

Pemetrexed can reduce the number of white blood cells, or blood-clotting cells (platelets) and red blood cells in the blood. Tell your doctor if (1)Your temperature goes over over 38 °C (100.4 °F); you suddenly feel unwell, even with a normal temperature; you have symptoms of an infection (this can include feeling shaky, a sore throat, a cough, diarrhoea or needing to pass urine a lot. (2)You have any bruising or bleeding you can't explain (nosebleeds/ bleeding gums/blood spots/ rashes on the skin); (3)If the number of red blood cells is low, you may be tired and breathless. Tell your doctor or nurse if you feel like this.

Nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite	You will be given anti-nausea medication before receiving your chemotherapy. You will be instructed to continue anti-nausea medications at home as needed and will be supplied with a prescription for these anti-nausea medications. If your anti-nausea medications are not helpful, let your doctor or your doctor’s nurse know. Small, frequent, bland, low fat foods are usually best tolerated.
Diarrhea	If you have 3 or more watery bowel movements in a 24-hour period let your doctor or your doctor’s nurse know. Have an over-the-counter anti-diarrhea medication, such as Imodium (loperamide), available at home.
Mouth sores	Good mouth care is very important. Inspect your mouth daily in a mirror. If you notice increased redness or white patches, or develop a burning sensation in your mouth, let your doctor or your doctor’s nurse know. Discuss with your nurse steps you can take to prevent or alleviate mouth sores. These symptoms may occur a few days after your treatment with Pemetrexed. Avoid the use of commercial mouthwashes; they contain alcohol, which is drying to the lining of the mouth. Keep your mouth moist. Rinse your mouth with salt water 4 times per day.
Skin rashes	You may get a rash or have itching after receiving Pemetrexed. This generally appears between treatments with Pemetrexed and usually goes away before your next treatment. If you develop a rash that becomes severe or very itchy let your doctor or your doctor’s nurse know. When you speak with our staff they will want to know if your rash is raised or flat, red or pink, itchy, and where the rash is located.
It’s important to let your doctor know straight away if you feel unwell or have any severe side effects, even if they’re not mentioned above.	

Reference: Treatment and Chemotherapy Administration Resource For The Adult Patient.. Cancer Maine Medical Center.