

Gemcitabine

About This Medicine

Gemcitabine is used to treat cancer. It is given in the vein (IV).

Possible Side Effects

- Bone marrow suppression. This is a decrease in the number of white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. This may raise your risk of infection, make you tired and weak, and raise your risk of bleeding.
- Nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- Fever
- Swelling of the hands, feet, or any other part of the body
- Changes in your liver function
- Increased protein in your urine, which can affect how your kidneys work
- Blood in your urine
- Trouble breathing
- Rash

Note: Each of the side effects above was reported in 20% or greater of patients treated with gemcitabine. All possible side effects are not included. Your side effects may be different depending on your cancer diagnosis, condition, or if you are receiving other medicines in combination. Please discuss any concerns or questions with your medical team.

Warnings and Precautions

- Severe bone marrow suppression
- Severe changes in your liver function, which can cause liver failure and may be life-threatening.
- Thickening and/or inflammation (swelling) of the lung tissues, or fluid may build-up around your lungs, which can be life-threatening. You may have a dry cough or trouble breathing.
- If you have received radiation treatments, your skin may become red after gemcitabine. This reaction is called “radiation recall.” Your body is recalling, or remembering, that it had radiation therapy.
- When gemcitabine is given in combination with radiation treatment, you may develop inflammation of the lungs or soreness of the mouth and throat which can be life-threatening.

- A syndrome where fluid and protein can leak from your blood vessels into your tissues. This can cause a decrease in your blood protein level and blood pressure and fluid can accumulate in your tissues and/or lungs.
- A syndrome can occur that affects your red blood cells, platelets, and blood vessels in your kidneys, which can cause kidney failure and be life-threatening.
- Swelling in the brain that is usually reversible. Symptoms can be sudden (acute) and may include a headache, confusion, changes in eyesight, extreme tiredness/coma, and/or seizures. **If you start to have any of these symptoms let your doctor know right away.**

Note: Some of the side effects above are very rare. If you have concerns and/or questions, please discuss them with your medical team.

Important Information

- Cytotoxic medicines leave the body through urine and stool, but they can also be present in other body fluids such as blood, vomit, semen, and vaginal fluids. Take precautions to prevent others from coming in contact with your medicine or your body fluids. Follow safety precautions during your treatment and for as long as directed by your health care provider after your treatment. If you take a cytotoxic pill each day, follow these precautions every day.

Treating Side Effects

- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day.
- Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.
- To decrease the risk of infection, wash your hands regularly.
- Avoid close contact with people who have a cold, the flu, or other infections.
- Take your temperature as your doctor or nurse tells you, and whenever you feel like you may have a fever.
- To help decrease the risk of bleeding, use a soft toothbrush. Check with your nurse before using dental floss.
- Be very careful when using knives or tools.
- Use an electric shaver instead of a razor.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine pale yellow.
- If you throw up or have diarrhea, you should drink more fluids so that you do not become dehydrated (lack of water in the body from losing too much fluid).
- To help with nausea and vomiting, eat small, frequent meals instead of three large meals a day. Choose foods and drinks that are at room temperature. Ask your nurse or doctor about other helpful tips and medicine that is available to help stop or lessen these symptoms.
- If you get a rash do not put anything on it unless your doctor or nurse says you may. Keep the area around the rash clean and dry. Ask your doctor for medicine if your rash bothers you.
- If you received radiation, and your skin becomes red or irritated again, or you develop soreness of the mouth and throat, follow the same care instructions you did during radiation treatment. Be sure to tell the nurse or doctor administering your chemotherapy about your skin changes.



Food and Medicine Interactions

- There are no known interactions of gemcitabine with food.
- This medicine may interact with other medicines. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the prescription and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, and others) that you are taking at this time. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medicines, or dietary supplements to make sure that there are no interactions.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any of these symptoms and/or any new or unusual symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Chills
- Extreme tiredness and/or coma
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Confusion
- Symptoms of a seizure such as confusion, blacking out, passing out, loss of hearing or vision, blurred vision, unusual smells or tastes (such as burning rubber), trouble talking, tremors or shaking in parts or all of the body, repeated body movements, tense muscles that do not relax, and loss of control of urine and bowels. **If you or your family member suspects you are having a seizure, call 911 right away.**
- Headache that does not go away
- Blurry vision or changes in your eyesight
- Pain in your chest or abdomen
- Dry cough
- Wheezing and/or trouble breathing
- Easy bleeding or bruising
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking and/or is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- Swelling of the face, hands, feet, or any other part of the body
- Weight gain of 5 pounds in one week (fluid retention)
- Blood in urine
- Decreased or very dark urine
- Foamy or bubbly-looking urine
- A new rash and/or itching or a rash that is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Signs of possible liver problems: dark urine, pale bowel movements, pain in your abdomen, feeling very tired and weak, unusual itching, or yellowing of the eyes or skin
- If you think you may be pregnant or may have impregnated your partner

Reproduction Warnings



- **Pregnancy warning:** This medicine can have harmful effects on the unborn baby. Women of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for 6 months after stopping treatment. Men with female partners of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for 3 months after stopping treatment. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant or may have impregnated your partner.
- **Breastfeeding warning:** Women should not breastfeed during treatment and for at least 1 week after stopping treatment because this medicine could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** In men, this medicine may affect your ability to have children in the future. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children. Ask for information on sperm banking.

Revised February 2024

