

Paclitaxel

About This Medicine

Paclitaxel is a medicine 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.
- Abnormal electrocardiogram (EKG/ECG)
- Soreness of the mouth and throat. You may have red areas, white patches, or sores in your mouth that hurt.
- Nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- Diarrhea (loose bowel movements)
- Abnormal bleeding – symptoms may be coughing up blood, throwing up blood (may look like coffee grounds), red or black tarry bowel movements, abnormally heavy menstrual flow, nosebleeds, or any other unusual bleeding.
- Swelling of the hands, feet, or any other part of the body
- Allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis are rare but may happen in some patients and can be life-threatening. Signs of allergic reaction to this medicine may be swelling of the face, feeling like your tongue or throat are swelling, trouble breathing, flushing, fever, chills, feeling dizzy, and/or feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way. **If this happens, do not take another dose of this medicine. You should get urgent medical treatment.**
- Changes in your liver function
- Infections
- Bone, joint and muscle pain
- Effects on the nerves are called peripheral neuropathy. You may feel numbness, tingling, or pain in your hands and feet. It may be hard for you to button your clothes, open jars, or walk as usual. The effect on the nerves may get worse with more doses of the medicine. These effects get better in some people after the medicine is stopped but it does not get better in all people.
- Changes in your kidney function
- Hair loss. Hair loss is often temporary, although with certain medicine, hair loss can sometimes be permanent. Hair loss may happen suddenly or gradually. If you lose hair, you may lose it from your head, face, armpits, pubic area, chest, and/or legs. You may also notice your hair getting thin.

Note: 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, which can be life-threatening.
- Severe abnormal heartbeat which can rarely require pacemaker placement.
- Changes in blood pressure and decreased heart rate
- Injection site reaction - you may get a rash, swelling or bruising or your skin may get red, warm, itchy, or painful at the site of your infusion.
- Severe allergic reactions

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.
- If you are receiving this medicine in the abdominal cavity (intraperitoneally/IP), talk to your doctor and/or nurse about possible side effects, necessary precautions, and what to expect during this treatment.

Treating Side Effects

- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day.
- Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.
- Get regular exercise, with your doctor's approval. If you feel too tired to exercise vigorously, try taking a short walk.
- 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 plenty of fluids (a minimum of eight glasses per day is recommended).
- 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 have diarrhea, eat low-fiber foods that are high in protein and calories and avoid foods that can irritate your digestive tracts or lead to cramping.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about medicine that can lessen or stop diarrhea.
- Keeping your pain under control is important to your well-being. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you are experiencing pain.
- Mouth care is very important. Your mouth care should consist of routine, gentle cleaning of your teeth or dentures and rinsing your mouth with a mixture of 1/2 teaspoon of salt in 8 ounces of water or 1/2 teaspoon of baking soda in 8 ounces of water. This should be done at least after each meal and at bedtime.
- If you have mouth sores, avoid mouthwash that has alcohol. Also avoid alcohol and smoking because they can bother your mouth and throat.
- If you have numbness and tingling in your hands and feet, be careful when cooking, walking, and handling sharp objects and hot liquids.
- While you are getting this medicine, please tell your nurse right away if you get a rash, swelling or bruising or your skin gets red, warm, itchy or painful at the site of your infusion.
- To help with hair loss, wash with a mild shampoo and avoid washing your hair every day. Avoid coloring your hair.
- Avoid rubbing your scalp, pat your hair or scalp dry.
- Limit your use of hair spray, electric curlers, blow dryers, and curling irons.
- If you are interested in getting a wig, talk to your nurse and they can help you get in touch with programs in your local area.

Food and Medicine Interactions

- There are no known interactions of paclitaxel 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 the following symptoms and/or any new or unusual symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Chills
- A headache that does not go away
- Blurry vision or other changes in eyesight
- Extreme tiredness or weakness that interferes with normal activities



- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Easy bleeding or bruising
- Feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way (palpitations)
- Trouble breathing
- Signs of abnormal bleeding such as coughing up blood, throwing up blood (may look like coffee grounds), easy bleeding or bruising, red or black tarry bowel movements, abnormally heavy menstrual flow, nosebleeds, or any other unusual bleeding
- Pain in your mouth or throat that makes it hard to eat or drink
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking, and/or that is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- Diarrhea, 4 times in one day or diarrhea with weakness or lightheadedness
- Numbness, tingling, or pain in your hands and feet
- Weight gain of 5 pounds in one week (fluid retention)
- Swelling of the hands, feet, or any other part of the body
- Decreased or very dark urine
- Signs of 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
- Pain that does not go away or is not relieved by prescribed medicine
- Signs of infection: fever or chills, cough, trouble breathing, severe pain in your abdomen, difficulty urinating, burning or pain when you pass urine, redness and/or swelling of the skin
- Signs of allergic reaction: swelling of the face, feeling like your tongue or throat are swelling, trouble breathing, rash, itching, fever, chills, feeling dizzy, and/or feeling that your heart is beating in a fast or not normal way. **If this happens, call 911 for emergency care.**
- If you think you are pregnant

Reproduction Warnings

- **Pregnancy warning:** This medicine can have harmful effects on the unborn baby. Women of child-bearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant.
- **Breastfeeding warning:** It is not known if this medicine passes into breast milk. For this reason, women should not breastfeed during treatment because this medicine could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** In men and women both, 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 or egg banking.

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