

## CHEMOTHERAPY REGIMEN INFO SHEET

### **AC Chemotherapy**

(Doxorubicin -also known as **Adriamycin®** and **Cyclophosphamide**)

#### **What is AC?**

AC is a drug combination given for the treatment of breast cancer.

#### **How is it given?**

Your treatment plan consists of 4 chemotherapy cycles. Each cycle lasts 3 weeks (21 days). You will receive two drugs (Doxorubicin, Cyclophosphamide) through a vein in your arm (IV) on the first day (Day 1) of each cycle. Days 2 to 21 are rest days. You will have a blood test before each treatment to check if your blood counts are high enough for you to receive chemotherapy.

#### **Precautions:**

- Doxorubicin can cause damage to surrounding tissues if it leaks out of the vein and into the surrounding area. The nurses are extremely careful when they give you the medication, but tell them immediately if you experience burning or pain with the injection.
- Doxorubicin can have an effect on the function of the heart in some patients causing shortness of breath, fatigue and leg swelling. Your oncologist may order special heart tests, most often before your very first treatment. Tell your oncologist if you are concerned about any symptoms and if you have had any heart problems.
- Cyclophosphamide can irritate your bladder. Drink plenty of fluids (at least 8 glasses per day) during the day and empty your bladder (pass urine) frequently. Tell your oncologist or nurse if you experience pain on urination, see blood in your urine, or need to urinate small amounts frequently.
- All patients will experience some or total hair loss. This generally starts 2 to 3 weeks after the first injection. Your scalp may feel tender. It's a good idea to consider a wig or other head covering before starting treatment. Hair loss on your face (e.g. eyebrows, eyelashes) and body can also occur. Your hair will start to grow back once all of your treatments are over. The colour and texture of your new hair may be different.
- Medications in this regimen may make your periods heavier or lighter. Your periods may even stop completely. This may be permanent. You may develop symptoms of menopause such as hot flashes, vaginal dryness,

Information presented here are events likely to take place, but some rare events may have been excluded.

For more information on this regimen, please call your oncologist, pharmacist or nurse,  
or call the Cancer Information Service at 1-888-939-3333.

mood swings and changes in sexual desire. Please discuss any concerns you have with your nurse or oncologist.

- Since these medications may harm your baby if used during pregnancy, women who have not yet reached menopause should use effective forms of birth control while on treatment. Do not use birth control pills. Please discuss this with your oncologist. If you become pregnant, tell your oncologist right away. Do not breastfeed while undergoing treatment. Also, if you plan to have children in the future, discuss this with your oncologist before starting your first treatment, as chemotherapy may affect your fertility and your chances of having a baby in the future.
- Tell your oncologist, nurse, and pharmacist about other prescription and non-prescription medications you are taking. Check with your oncologist, nurse or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs, including herbal or alternative treatments. Also tell other healthcare professionals you are seeing about the chemotherapy you are receiving.
- It is important to tell your oncologist about any other medical conditions you have, as some conditions may affect therapy with this treatment.
- Due to increased risk of developing infections, check with your oncologist before having any vaccinations. Also check with your oncologist before any surgery or dental work.
- If you are taking ASA (*Aspirin®*, *acetylsalicylic acid*), please discuss this with your oncologist as this may interfere with your chemotherapy treatment. For headache, fever, or occasional aches and pains, use *acetaminophen (Tylenol®)* instead of ASA.

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## Other common or important side effects associated with AC Chemotherapy are:

SIDE EFFECTS	WHEN WILL IT START? /PREVENTION /	WHAT YOU SHOULD DO
Nausea and vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually worst in the first 12 –24 hours and usually wears off by days 3 to 7.</li> <li>Take prescribed medicine for nausea and vomiting. Continue drinking clear fluids. Get fresh air and rest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you vomit within 1 hour of taking anti-vomiting tablets, you may take another dose. A suppository may be ordered if you can't keep pills down. Phone your oncologist if vomiting lasts more than 24 hours or nausea longer than 48 hours.</li> <li>See <a href="#">Nausea and Vomiting</a> pamphlet.</li> </ul>
Signs of infection/ fever, chills, cough, sore throat Low white blood cells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The risk of infection is greatest between days 10 to 21 of each treatment cycle.</li> <li>Limit contact with people who are sick or have colds. Rest often. Wash your hands often.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep a thermometer at home. Recognize signs of infection. <b>Phone your oncologist or go to the closest emergency room</b> right away if your temperature is over 38° C or 100° F. You may need antibiotics.</li> </ul>
Irritated and watery eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoid wearing contact lenses during your treatment. You might be more sensitive to sunlight. Wear sunglasses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of artificial tears may help soothe your eyes.</li> </ul>
Sores in the mouth or the lips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May occur a few days after treatment begins.</li> <li>Maintain good mouth hygiene. Brush teeth often with a soft toothbrush. Avoid hot, spicy and acidic foods.</li> <li>Avoid commercial mouthwashes.</li> <li>See <a href="#">Mouth Care</a> pamphlet.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check with your oncologist or nurse as soon as you notice sores on lips or tongue and in the mouth.</li> </ul>
Tiredness or weakness Lack of energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tends to increase with the number of cycles given.</li> <li>Eat well-balanced meals. Some mild exercise, such as walking, may help.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rest when feeling tired or weak. Don't drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery.</li> <li>Your energy level will improve over time. However, it may take a few months for the tiredness to go away even after your chemotherapy is finished.</li> </ul>
Red Urine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your urine will turn pink or red for up to 24 hours after you receive the drug Doxorubicin.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is normal and is due to the colour of the drug.</li> </ul>
Difficulties with memory or concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May happen to some patients after chemotherapy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This may take months to years to improve.</li> <li>Contact your doctor if this affects your daily functions.</li> </ul>
Hair loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally starts 2 to 3 weeks after the first injection.</li> <li>Use a gentle shampoo and a soft brush. Avoid dyes, perms, bleaches and hair sprays. Protect your scalp from sun exposure and cold weather.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is expected. Your hair will grow back after your chemotherapy is finished.</li> </ul>
Joint pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May happen about a month after treatment. This can last up to a year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your family doctor can help you to manage this</li> <li>Discuss this with your oncologist.</li> </ul>