Asparaginase

- **Asparaginase** (a-SPARE-a-gi-nase) is a drug that is used to treat many types of cancers. It is a clear liquid that is injected into a vein or muscle or under the skin.

- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to any type of asparaginase before taking asparaginase.

- A **blood test** may be taken before each treatment. The dose and timing of your chemotherapy may be changed based on the test results and/or other side effects.

- **Alcohol** may increase the risk of liver problems with this drug and should be avoided.

- It is not known if this drug can cause **sterility** in men or **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated.

- This drug may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with this drug. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.

- **Tell** doctors, dentists or other health care providers that you are being treated with this medication before you receive any other treatment from them.

Changes in blood counts

This drug may cause temporary changes in your blood counts. Your doctor will be following these changes carefully by performing blood tests. .Adjustment of your treatment may be needed in certain circumstances

BLOOD COUNTS	MANAGEMENT
Normal white blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. **When they are low, you are at greater risk of having an infection**	To help prevent infection: • Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom. • Avoid crowds and people who are sick. • Visit the National Center of Cancer Care and Research (NCCCR) urgent care unit **immediately** at the first sign of an infection such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.
Normal platelets help your blood to clot normally after an injury (e.g., cut). **When the platelet count is low you may be more likely to bruise or bleed**	To help prevent bleeding problems: • Try not to bruise, cut, or burn yourself. • Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose. • Avoid constipation. • Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. Maintain good oral hygiene. Some medications such as aspirin, ibuprofen or other pain medications may increase your risk of bleeding. • For minor pain, try paracetamol (Panadol ®) • Refer to your doctor if any of these medications has been prescribed to you.

Side effects that may occur and tips for management

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Allergic reactions may **sometimes** occur. Signs of an allergic reaction may include flushing, rash, itching, dizziness, .swelling or breathing problems This can occur immediately or several hours after receiving this drug	Tell your nurse if this happens while you are receiving asparaginase or visit the National Center of Cancer Care and Research (NCCCR) urgent care unit **immediately** if this happens after you leave the day care unit
Pain or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed	Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15-20 minutes several times a day
Nausea is rare with this drug	
Loss of appetite and **weight loss** sometimes occur and may persist after .discontinuation of the drug	
Tiredness and **lack of energy** sometimes occur with this drug	• Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.
Hair loss does not occur with this drug	

SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of an **allergic reaction** soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heartbeat, face swelling, or breathing problems.
- Signs of a **stroke** such as sudden onset of: severe headache, eyesight changes, slurred speech, loss of coordination, weakness or numbness in arm or leg.
- **Severe** abdominal pain.
- **Excessive** thirst or **increased** quantity or frequency of urination.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin; extensive bruising.
- Signs of a **blood clot** such as tenderness or hardness over a vein, calf swelling and tenderness, sudden onset of cough, chest pain, or shortness of breath.
- **Seizures** or **loss of consciousness.**
- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer), shaking chills; cough, severe sore throat, productive cough (coughing up thick or green sputum; cloudy or foul smelling urine; painful, tender, or swollen red skin wounds or sores.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Signs of **kidney problems** such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs.
- **Dizziness, lightheadedness**, or **feeling of faintness.**
- **Numbness** or **tingling** in feet or hands.

CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- For diabetics: uncontrolled blood sugars.
- Headache not controlled with paracetamol (Panadol ®).
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores where the needle was placed.

REPORT ADDITIONAL PROBLEMS TO YOUR DOCTOR

This is a summary of useful information to help you understand and take your medicine safely .

We are available to answer your questions For urgent inquiries contact :

- **Urgent care unit at the National Center of Cancer Care and Research (NCCCR) TEL : 44397179 (available 24 hours, all week days).**

For further information or question contact :

- **Your doctor** (from 7 am – 3 pm) .
- **Clinical Pharmacy section,** TEL: 44397239 (Sun-Thurs from 7 am – 3 pm) .
- **Outpatient Pharmacy**, TEL: 44397531, 44397825 (Sun-Thurs from 7 am – 3 pm) .

Pharmacy Department

18-0069