Cytarabine

- **Cytarabine** (sye-TARE-a-been) is a drug that is used to treat many types of cancer. It is a clear liquid that is injected into a vein, muscle, or under the skin.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to cytarabine before taking cytarabine.
- 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.
- Some drugs, herbal products and supplements may **interact** with your treatment. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any of these or before you start taking any new drugs.
- Cytarabine may cause **sterility** in men and **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with cytarabine.
- Cytarabine may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with cytarabine. 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.

SIDE EFFECTS	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 getting 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 Urgent Care Unit at the National Center for Cancer Care and Research (NCCCR) **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. 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 have been prescribed to you.

Side effects that may occur and tips for management

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
Pain or tenderness may occur where the needle was placed.	Apply cool compresses or soak in cool water for 15 to 20 minutes several times a day.
Nausea and vomiting may occur after your treatment and may last for 48 hours. Most people have little or no nausea. Nausea and vomiting are more common with higher doses.	You may be given a prescription for antinausea drug(s) to take before your chemotherapy treatment and/or at home. **It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred,** so follow directions closely. • **Drink plenty of fluids.** • **Eat and drink often in small amounts.**
Fever may commonly occur shortly after treatment with cytarabine. Fever should last no longer than 24 hours.	• Take paracetamol (Panadol ®). • Fever which occurs more than a few days after treatment may be the sign of an infection.
Sore mouth may occur a few days after treatment. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat. **Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.** Sore mouth is more common with higher doses.	• Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed, use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste. • Make a mouthwash with ½ teaspoon baking soda or salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day.
Confusion, memory loss, and/or abnormal speech or body movements may sometimes occur. These symptoms are more common with higher doses and usually go away without any treatment in 5-10 days.	• Call your doctor during office hours to report these symptoms.
Loss of appetite may sometimes occur and may persist after discontinuation of cytarabine.	
Hair loss is rare with cytarabine. Hair loss is more common with higher doses. Your hair will grow back once you stop treatment with cytarabine. Colour and texture may change.	• Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush. • Apply mineral oil to your scalp to reduce itching.

Patient education leaflet
Adapted from BC Cancer Drug Manual - Canada (Developed: Spetember 1994; Revised: May 2007)
Prepared by Clinical Pharmacy Department at the National Center for Cancer Care and Research - Version 1 on May 2017

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

- 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.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin; extensive bruising.
- Signs of an **allergic reaction** (rare) soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heartbeat, face swelling, or breathing problems.
- **Seizures** or **loss of consciousness**.
- Signs of **heart or lung problems** such as fast or uneven heartbeat, chest pain, chest pressure, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, swelling of ankles, or fainting.

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

- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Signs of **gout** such as joint pain.
- **Numbness or tingling** in feet or hands.
- **Changes in eyesight** or **eye irritation**.
- Ringing in your ears or **hearing problems.**
- Difficulty **thinking** clearly and logically.
- Difficulty with **balance or trouble walking** or talking.

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

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or weight loss.
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- Pain not controlled by paracetamol (Panadol ®)
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth, or throat.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores where the needle was placed.
- Skin rash or itching.

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