Gemcitabine (Gemzar®)
(“jem sIte a been”)

How drug is given: by vein (IV)

Purpose: to kill cancer cells in treatment of non-small cell lung cancer, sarcoma, breast, pancreatic, ovarian and other cancers.

Things that may occur during or within hours of treatment

1. Gemcitabine, as with many drugs, may cause an allergic reaction. If you have a rash, facial flushing (warmth or redness of the face), or itching during or after you get this drug, please tell your doctor or nurse right away.

2. Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite may occur. You may be given medicine to help with this.

3. Flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, headache, muscle and/or joint aches are common. If these occur, talk to your doctor and nurse.

4. Loose stools or diarrhea may occur (after the drug is given) (within a few days after the drug is started). You may take loperamide (Imodium A-D®) to help control diarrhea. You may buy this at most drug stores. It is also important to drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help, tell your doctor or nurse.

5. If you feel any burning or tingling in the area of your IV, please tell your nurse right away. If you develop any swelling or redness after you go home, please call your doctor or nurse.

Things that may occur a few days to weeks later

1. Your body may not be able to get rid of extra fluid. This is called edema. You may notice some swelling in your arms or legs.

2. Your hair may thin or fall out after treatment starts.
3. Your blood cell counts may drop. This is known as bone marrow suppression. This includes a decrease in your:
   - Red blood cells, which carry oxygen in your body to help give you energy
   - White blood cells, which fight infection in your body
   - Platelets, which help clot the blood to stop bleeding

This may happen 7 to 14 days after the drug is given and then blood counts should return to normal. If you have a fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, tell your doctor or nurse right away.

4. Skin changes such as dryness or a rash on your body or arms and legs may occur.

5. You may get mouth sores 7 to 10 days after this drug is given. It is important to keep your mouth clean. A soft-bristle toothbrush should be used for brushing your teeth. You may have a burning feeling and redness inside the mouth or on the lips. Use a baking soda mouth rinse 4 or 5 times a day.

   **Mouth Rinse Recipe:**
   Mix: 1 tsp salt or baking soda with 8 oz. glass of water

Other mouth rinses may be ordered by your doctor. Do not use mouth washes that have alcohol in them because they will dry out the mouth. If you cannot eat or swallow because of this, let your doctor or nurse know. Check with your doctor before having any dental work done.

6. Sometimes, shortness of breath may occur. Report any shortness of breath or cough that is not normal to your doctor or nurse.

**Things that may occur after treatment ends (even months to years later)**

- Fertility and Related Precautions:
  - It is still very important to use birth control if you are having sex, because this drug could harm an unborn baby.
  - Men may become sterile and may want to think about sperm banking prior to chemotherapy.
  - For women, your period (menstrual cycle) may not be regular for a while or may stop completely and you may not be able to get pregnant.
  - Women should not breast-feed while receiving this drug.
  - If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your doctor or nurse.

_The above information includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects in this teaching sheet may not be the same ones you experience. Your side effects may be different, depending on how often you receive treatment (your schedule) and how much you receive each time (your dosage). Side effects may also vary if you take other medications. Please talk with your doctor or nurse if you have questions about possible side effects you may experience. This document should not take the place of conversations with members of your health care team._
If you experience any significant change in your health during or after treatment, contact a member of your health care team right away.

THIS SPACE RESERVED FOR WRITTEN COMMENTS OR NOTES FOR THE PATIENT AND FAMILY: