Interferon (Roferon®, Intron®)
(“in ter FEER on”)

How this drug is given: by vein (IV)

Purpose: to help the body kill cancer cells in patients with melanoma, renal cell cancer, and other cancers

Things that may occur during treatment

1. Facial flushing, itching, or a skin rash could occur after taking interferon.

2. Flu-like symptoms, such as fever, chills, headache, and muscle or joint aches, are common. If these occur, your doctor may suggest taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to help control the symptoms. Please let your doctor or nurse know if acetaminophen (Tylenol) does not help, because other medications may be prescribed.

3. Some patients may feel very tired, also known as fatigue. You may need to rest or take naps more often. Mild to moderate exercise may also help you maintain your energy.

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

5. 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

   If you have a fever of 100.5°F (38°C) or higher, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, call your doctor or nurse right away.

6. Loose stools or diarrhea may occur within a few days after the drug is given. You may take loperamide (Imodium A-D®) to help control diarrhea. You can buy this at most drug stores. It is also important to drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help within 24 hours, call your doctor or nurse.

7. Some or all of your hair may fall out around 3 to 4 weeks after treatment starts. You may lose hair on your head, as well as facial and body hair. You may want to buy a wig before hair loss begins. Hair may grow back during treatment.
8. You may notice a change in your mood or feel depressed. You may feel teary, have trouble sleeping, or find it hard to concentrate. Please talk with your doctor or nurse if you experience any of these symptoms.

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

- Fertility and Related Precautions
  - It is 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.