



Cytarabine (Cytosar U®)

("sye-TARE-a-been")

How drug is given: by vein (IV), injection, or in the spine

Purpose: to stop the growth of leukemia and other cancers

Things that may occur during or within hours of each treatment

1. You may have nausea, vomiting, and/or loss of appetite. Nausea and vomiting may begin soon after the drug is given and may last more than 24 hours. You may be given medicine to help with this.
2. Loose stools or diarrhea may occur after the drug is given. You may take loperamide (Imodium A-D®) to help control diarrhea. You can buy this at most drug stores. Drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help within 24 hours, **call your cancer care team**.
3. Flu-like symptoms such as fever, chills, headache, muscle and/or joint aches are common. If these occur, your cancer care team may suggest taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to help control the symptoms. Please let your cancer care team know if acetaminophen (Tylenol) does not help, since other medications may be prescribed.

Things that may occur a few days to weeks later

1. Your blood cell counts may drop. This is known as bone marrow suppression. This includes a decrease in:
 - 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 **call your cancer care team right away**.

2. You may get mouth sores 7 to 10 days after this drug is given. It is important to keep your mouth clean. Use a soft-bristle toothbrush 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 cancer care team. Do not use mouthwash with alcohol because it will dry out the mouth. If you cannot eat or swallow, tell your cancer care team. Check with your cancer care team before having any dental work done.

3. Some or all 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.
4. Skin changes, such as dryness or a rash on your body, may occur. Ask your cancer care team what lotions or creams you may use.
5. When high doses of the drug are given, these symptoms may occur: feeling sleepy, dizzy, or off balance; headache; muscle weakness; confusion; vision changes; or seizures. **Tell your cancer care team right away** if any of these symptoms occur.
6. Eyes may get itchy and watery and bright light may bother you. Natural tears or saline eye drops may help with these symptoms.
7. You may have blurred vision or notice other changes to your vision. Ask your cancer care team about what might help.

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

- Fertility:
 - It is very important to use birth control if you have sex, because this drug could harm an unborn baby.
 - Men can 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.
 - If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your cancer care team.

The above information includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects listed 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 are taking other

medications. Please speak with your cancer care team if you have questions about possible side effects you may experience. This document should not take the place of conversations with members of your cancer care team.

If you experience any significant change in your health during or after treatment, contact a member of your cancer care team right away.

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