



Docetaxel (Taxotere®)

("doe-se-TAKS-el")

How drug is given: by vein (IV)

Purpose: Treatment of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, non-small cell lung cancer, prostate cancer, head and neck cancers, gastrointestinal cancer, and other cancers

Things that may occur during or within hours of treatment

- Facial flushing (warmth or redness of the face), itching, or a skin rash could occur. These symptoms are due to an allergic response and should be reported to your doctor or nurse **right away**.
- Your blood pressure may drop or your heart rate slow down while you are getting this drug. This usually goes back to normal on its own.
- Mild to moderate nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite may occur. You may be given medicine to help with this.
- If the drug leaks out of the vein into the tissue while it is being given, it can cause harm. This is called *extravasation*. If you feel any burning or tingling near your IV, please **tell your nurse right away**.
- **Swelling, redness, blisters or bruising around the area of the IV or port** may occur one or two weeks after getting this drug. **Call your doctor or nurse immediately if you experience any of these symptoms.**
- This drug contains ethanol, also known as alcohol, which rarely may cause patients to feel drunk during and after treatment. Symptoms such as confusion, stumbling, or becoming very sleepy may occur. This medication may impair your ability to drive or use heavy machinery for 1 to 2 hours after infusion.

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 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, call **your doctor or nurse 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. 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.

3. 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.
4. 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.
5. You may lose some feeling, or have tingling or burning in your hands and/or feet. This is called peripheral neuropathy. This may increase with continued treatment. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you have trouble buttoning your clothes. Peripheral neuropathy should get better over time, after the drug is stopped.
6. Skin changes, such as dryness or a rash on your body, may occur. Ask your doctor or nurse what lotions or creams you may use.
7. Some patients may feel very tired, also known as fatigue. You may need to rest or take naps more often. Mild to moderate exercise can also help you maintain your energy.
8. You may feel pain or weakness in your joints or muscles. This may happen about 2 to 3 days after you get docetaxel. This usually gets better in less than a week. If these bother you, ask your doctor or nurse what type of drugs you may use to help with the pain.

Things that may occur after your 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 since this drug may be harmful to 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 breastfeed 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 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 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: