



Chemotherapy: Epirubicin (Ellence®)

Pronounced: "ep-i-ROO-bi-sin"

How drug is given: By vein

Purpose: To stop the growth of cancer cells in breast cancer and other cancers

Things that may occur during or within hours of treatment

- An allergic reaction may occur. Tell your nurse **right away** if you have rash, itching, fever, chills, chest pain, difficulty breathing, or dizziness.
- Care is taken to prevent this drug from leaking into nearby tissue. If the drug leaks this is called an extravasation and it can cause harm. If you feel warmth, burning or tingling in the area of your IV, please let your nurse know 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 cancer care team immediately if you experience any of these symptoms.**
- 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.

Things that may occur a few days to weeks later

- 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.
- Hot flashes and/or sweats are common. As your body gets used to the drug, these may not bother you as much. Caffeine, spicy food, alcohol, and stress may cause these to get worse. Mild exercise may help.
- Loose stools or diarrhea may occur within a few days after the drug is started. You may take loperamide (Imodium A-D®) to help control diarrhea. You can buy this at most drug stores. Be sure to also drink more fluids (water, juice, sports drinks). If these do not help within 24 hours, call your cancer care team.
- Your blood cell counts may drop. This is known as bone marrow suppression. This may happen 7 to 14 days after the drug is given and then blood counts should return to normal. 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 (39°C) or higher**, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, **tell your cancer care team right away.**

- 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 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 cancer care team know. Check with your doctor before having any dental work done.

- Some patients may feel very tired, also known as fatigue. You may need to rest or take naps more often.

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

- This drug may affect your heart. This is usually linked to the total amount of drug that you are given over time. Your heart function will be followed. You should let your cancer care team know if you are coughing, having trouble breathing, have chest pain and/or swelling in the feet or ankles.
- In rare cases, you may be at risk of getting another type of cancer after taking Epirubicin.

Sexual health and fertility concerns

Women

- It is very important to use birth control while taking this drug and for at least one month after your last dose if you are having sex, because this drug may be harmful to an unborn baby.
- 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.

Men

- It is very important to use birth control if you are having sex with a woman of child-bearing age, because this drug could harm an unborn baby.
- Men can become sterile and may want to consider sperm banking prior to treatment.

The information in this document includes some, but not necessarily all, of the possible side effects of this medication. The side effects listed here 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.