Gemcitabine (Gemzar®)
(“jem-SITE-a-been”)

How drug is given: by vein (IV)

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

Things that may occur during or within hours of each treatment

1. 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 cancer care team.

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 pain, 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, because other medications may be prescribed.

4. 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.

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. Some of your hair may fall out with treatment. You may lose hair on your head as well as facial and body hair. Hair may grow back during treatment.

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 cancer care team right away.

4. Skin changes, such as dryness or a rash on your body or arms and legs, may occur. Ask your cancer care team what lotions or creams you may use.

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 cancer care team. 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 mouth problems, tell your cancer care team. Check with your cancer care team before having any dental work done.

6. If you develop a new or worsening cough or shortness of breath, tell your cancer care team.

7. Your liver may be affected by this medicine. On occasion, blood work will be taken to monitor your liver function.

8. Very rarely, you may have blood in the urine. If this occurs, please tell your cancer care team immediately.

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

Fertility:
- It is very important to use birth control if you are having 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 information in this document 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.