



Chemotherapy: Gemcitabine (Gemzar®)

Pronounced: "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, breast, pancreatic, ovarian and other cancers.

Things that may occur during or within hours of treatment

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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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**.

- 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. 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 this, let your cancer care team know. Check with your cancer care team before having any dental work done.
- Your liver may be affected by this medicine. On occasion, blood work will be taken to monitor your liver function.
- If you develop a new or worsening cough or shortness of breath, report this to your cancer care team.
- Very rarely, you may have blood in the urine. If this occurs, please let your cancer care team know immediately.

Sexual health and fertility

If you are concerned about any of this, please talk with your cancer care team.

Women

- It is very important to use birth control while taking this drug and for at least 6 months after your last dose if you are having sex, because this drug may be harmful to an unborn baby.
- Barrier methods of birth control prevent the sperm from reaching the egg. Discuss with your cancer team which type of barrier method is best for you. Some barrier methods are cervical caps, female/male condoms, and diaphragms with spermicides. Some are available over the counter; others must be prescribed.
- 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.

Men

- It is very important to use birth control while taking this drug and for at least 3 months after your last dose if you are having sex with a woman of child-bearing age, because this drug may be harmful to an unborn baby.

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.