



Chemotherapy: Pemetrexed (Alimta®)

Pronounced: "pem-e-TREXS-ed"

How drug is given: By vein (IV)

Purpose: To stop the growth of cancer cells in mesothelioma, lung cancer, and other cancers

Things that may occur during or within hours of treatment

- Facial flushing (warmth or redness of the face), itching, hives, or a skin rash could occur. These symptoms are due to an allergic response and should be reported to your cancer care team **right away**.
- You may have nausea, vomiting, and/or loss of appetite. You may be given medicine to help with this.

Things that may occur a few days to weeks later

- Skin changes such as dryness, peeling, and blisters/sores may occur. If you develop any of these changes please contact your cancer care team before using any topical lotions, creams or ointments. Your cancer care team may give you medications to help prevent this side effect.
- 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:
 - 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 (38°C) or higher**, chills, a cough, or any bleeding problems, **call your cancer care team right away**.

- Mild constipation may occur after treatment begins. Be sure to drink more fluids and increase fiber in your diet by eating fresh fruits and vegetables. A daily stool softener, such as docusate (Colace®), and/or laxatives, such as senna (Senokot®), may be helpful. If these do not help within 48 hours, tell your cancer care team. Do not use bulk-forming laxatives such as Metamucil® without first talking with your cancer care team.
- This drug may cause severe abdominal pain and loose stools or diarrhea within a few days after treatment. Call your cancer care team if you experience four or more loose bowel movements in one day or if your stool looks black or tarry, or you notice blood
- You may feel very tired, also known as fatigue. Over time, fatigue could worsen and you may feel physically weak or exhausted. This can be unrelated to activity. You may need to rest or take naps more often. Mild to moderate exercise may help you maintain energy.
- If you develop a new or worsening cough or shortness of breath, tell your cancer care team.
- Your kidneys may be affected by this medicine. On occasion, blood work will be taken to monitor your kidney function. Tell your cancer care team if you're producing less urine than normal.

Sexual health and reproductive concerns

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 six months after your last dose if you are having sex, because this drug may be harmful to an unborn baby.
- 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 and for one week after your last dose.

Men

- It is very important to use birth control while taking this drug and for at least three 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.
- Men can become sterile and may want to consider sperm banking prior to treatment.

The information in this document contains 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.