

# Gemcitabine Bladder Therapy

## Information for patients receiving gemcitabine to treat bladder cancer

Your doctor has decided that gemcitabine therapy is the best therapy for your bladder cancer.

Read this pamphlet to learn about:

- What it is
- How to prepare for it
- What to expect during therapy
- What to do when you get home

### Where to find us:

#### **Toronto General Hospital Cystoscopy Clinic**

2nd Floor, Norman Urquhart (NU) Building – Room 291

Phone: 416 340 3882



## **What is gemcitabine bladder therapy?**

Gemcitabine is a type of chemotherapy that is used in cancer treatment to slow or stop the growth of cancer cells in your body.

The medicine is put into the bladder using a catheter (tube).

## **How will I get gemcitabine therapy?**

You will get the therapy from a Registered Nurse in the Cystoscopy Unit.

1. Your nurse places a small catheter (tube) into your bladder through your urethra. This empties any urine (pee).
2. Your nurse then puts a small amount of gemcitabine fluid into your bladder through the catheter. This is called an **instillation**.
3. The nurse removes the catheter. You then hold the fluid in your bladder for 1 hour. This may be hard for some patients. Try to hold it as long as possible (no longer than 1 hour).
4. You can go home right after the instillation.

## **How often will I need to have gemcitabine therapy?**

Your urologist (bladder specialist) will talk with you about how many rounds of therapy you will need.

About 6 weeks after each round of therapy you will have a test called a **cystoscopy**. This test checks your bladder for any new tumours.

## Therapy schedule

- Round 1 of gemcitabine therapy is **once a week for 6 weeks**.
- Rest period is **2 to 3 months**.
- Maintenance therapy (if needed) is **once a week for 3 weeks or as ordered by your doctor**. You may have this again, as often as needed. There will be a rest period after each treatment.

## What should I do to prepare?

### On the morning of your therapy:

- **Phone the Cystoscopy Department** at 416 340 3882 for screening. You will be asked a few questions to make sure your therapy can go ahead.

We use this screening to:

- order your medicine and have it ready when you arrive.
- know if you have had any signs of infection, or a reaction from your last treatment. If this happens, we may need to change your therapy to another time.

**Important: If you do not phone in for your screening, your therapy will be delayed.**

- **Do not drink for at least 4 hours before your therapy.** This is to make sure your bladder is not full. To keep your mouth moist, you can sip a little liquid. You can eat that morning.
- **Do not take any diuretic medicine (water pills) before your therapy.** You can take diuretic medicine 4 hours **after** your gemcitabine therapy. You can take other medicines before therapy with a sip of water, if needed.

## What side effects could I have?

Most patients do not have major problems, but you may have some side effects. These can start a few hours after treatment and may last 1 to 2 days.

### The most common side effects are:

- you feel like you have the flu:
  - low fever (less than 38.5 °C)
  - chills
  - headaches
  - muscle aches or joint pain
- you have to urinate often, or pain when you urinate
- traces of blood in the urine
- urinating at night
- feeling very tired

These side effects usually last less than 2 days. If you feel any burning or pain, have to urinate often, or see blood in the toilet bowl, drink about 4 glasses of water. This will help to flush your bladder.

You can take a pain reliever like acetaminophen (regular Tylenol) to feel more comfortable. Talk to your pharmacist to check if acetaminophen is right for you.



### **Call your urologist if you have any of these symptoms for more than 48 hours:**

- a rash
- a fever greater than 38.5 °C
- blood in your urine
- you have to urinate often
- have a burning feeling when you urinate



**Go to your nearest emergency department right away if you have any of these signs soon after your therapy:**

- dizziness
- swelling of your face
- a fast heart beat
- breathing problems

### **Can I have sex after gemcitabine therapy?**

It is very important that you or your partner not get pregnant just after receiving gemcitabine therapy. The gemcitabine medicine stays in the body for up to a week and can damage sperm and eggs or harm a developing baby.

- Do not have sex (including oral sex, penetrative sex) for the first 24 hours after therapy
- After 24 hours for the next 7 days, use a condom (either an internal or external condom)

### **What else do I need to know?**

Talk to your doctor about having had gemcitabine therapy before you:

- have any dental work
- have any vaccinations
- start taking any new medicine

### **Who should I talk to if I have questions?**

Call your urologist if you have any more questions about gemcitabine therapy.



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