

# 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

### **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.

## Treating your urine after gemcitabine therapy

You need to treat your urine at home after you urinate (pee). This is important because gemcitabine is toxic (poisonous) to living cells. Healthcare professionals use gemcitabine very carefully and only to treat the cancer cells in your bladder.

You must be careful that you and others do not come into contact with this solution.



**To put as little of the toxic medications into the environment as possible, you have to treat your urine differently.**

Protect the environment by following the steps below:

- **Treat your urine each time you go to the bathroom. You will need to do this for 6 hours after your treatment.**
- Get 1 large bottle of household bleach (5.3 litres).
- After you urinate, pour 2 cups (500 millilitres) of household bleach into the toilet with the urine. Let it sit for 15 minutes.
- Sit to urinate. This helps to make sure the urine does not splash up and out of the toilet bowl.
- After 15 minutes, close the toilet lid. Then flush the toilet. Make sure the toilet lid is down to stop any splashes outside of the bowl.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after you go to the bathroom.

If you spill urine on the floor, toilet seat, or other area, you need to clean it well with **bleach mixture**. Mix about 2 tablespoons of bleach in 1 cup (250 millilitres) of water. Flush the tissue down the toilet. Allow the area to dry. Wash your hands with soap and water.

## 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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