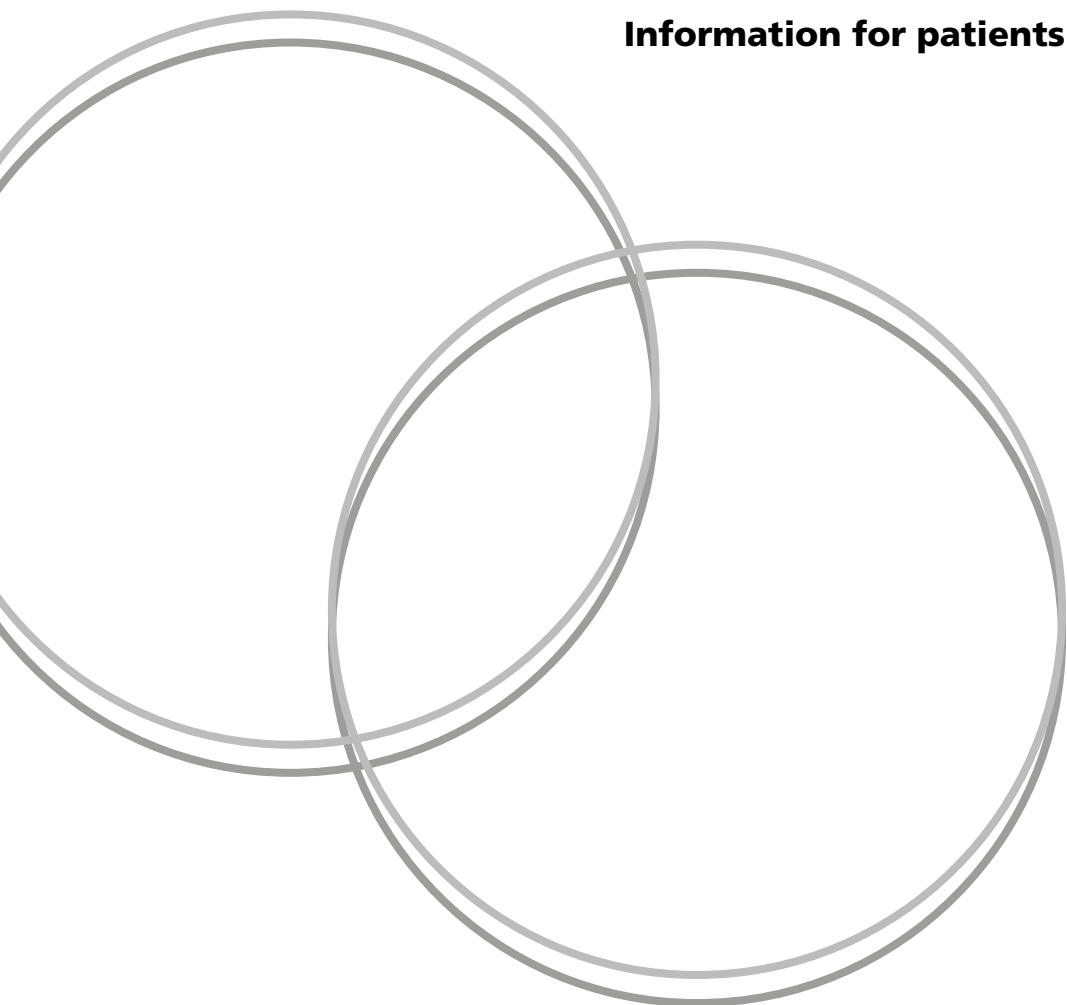




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# **Going home with ambulatory cyclophosphamide chemotherapy**

**Information for patients**



You have been given this leaflet as a guide to ambulatory cyclophosphamide for you and your family. You will also find it useful to refer to the Macmillan Chemotherapy information leaflet and Triage information leaflet. These will give you general information on chemotherapy, side effects and when to report symptoms.

## **What is ambulatory cyclophosphamide chemotherapy?**

Cyclophosphamide is a chemotherapy drug used alongside other chemotherapy to treat many different types of cancer.

Ambulatory means you are having the cyclophosphamide as an outpatient, whilst you are at home or in the on-site flat. You will continue to come for scheduled hospital visits to have the rest of your chemotherapy treatment and other medical and nursing care, as required.

Your chemotherapy team, with you and your carers, will make sure you are safe to have this treatment at home.

# How is the cyclophosphamide treatment given?

The drug is given gradually, through a drip into a central line. This is a long, thin plastic tube which is placed into a large vein in your chest or a vein in your arm.

The drip runs through a pump, which is pre-set and programmed by your Acute Chemotherapy (AC) nurse to give you the cyclophosphamide over a set amount of time. You will need to come to the hospital to have the bags of chemotherapy changed and/or for the drip and pump to be disconnected once the dose is complete.

You will also be given a drug called mesna when you have cyclophosphamide. This medication helps to prevent the cyclophosphamide irritating your bladder. You will have this through your central line in a separate infusion, alongside the cyclophosphamide.

It is very important to stay well hydrated when receiving chemotherapy, to help clear the cyclophosphamide from your body and protect your kidneys. You will need to drink at least two litres of fluid (three and a half pints) each day whilst you are having cyclophosphamide.

# Signs to look out for whilst having ambulatory cyclophosphamide

**This treatment can have serious or possibly life-threatening side effects. It is very important that you report any side effects straight away. Don't delay.**

**If you feel unwell, please ring Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage.**

**Tel: 01865 572 192  
(24 hours a day, 7 days a week)**

Chemotherapy can cause many different side effects. Some are more likely to occur than others. Everyone is different and not everyone gets all the side effects.

Most side effects are usually temporary, but in some rare cases they can be life-threatening. The possible side effects from cyclophosphamide will be explained to you by your doctor and AC nurses.

You must contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage immediately if you develop any of the following side effects or symptoms whilst you are away from the hospital and receiving cyclophosphamide.

## **Bladder irritation**

Cyclophosphamide may irritate your bladder and cause stinging, pain and discomfort when you pass urine. It may also cause slight pink to bright red blood in your urine.

To help prevent this, make sure you drink at least two litres (three and a half pints) of fluids during and for 24 hours after the cyclophosphamide drip. It is also important to empty your bladder regularly and to try to pass urine as soon as you feel the need to go.

The mesna you will be given will help to prevent and/or treat bladder irritation.

Contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage straight away if you feel any discomfort or stinging when you pass urine, or if you notice any blood in your urine. Sometimes menstruation and urinary

tract infections can cause small amounts of blood to be present in your urine. If you are experiencing either of these prior to starting your cyclophosphamide, please let your AC nurse know.

## **Feeling sick**

You may feel sick for the first few days after having the cyclophosphamide chemotherapy. Your doctor will prescribe anti-sickness (anti-emetic) medications to help prevent or control this. Take these exactly as your nurse or pharmacist explains to you, as it is easier to prevent sickness than to treat it after it has started.

If you still feel sick after taking the anti-sickness medications for 24 hours, and this is affecting your ability to eat, drink or carry out daily tasks, or if you are actually being sick, contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage as soon as possible. They can give you advice on how to manage the symptoms and may change your anti-sickness medication to something that works better for you.

It is very important that you are still able to keep well hydrated and drink at least two litres of fluid each day, to help clear the cyclophosphamide from your body and protect your kidneys. If you are unable to manage this due to feeling or being sick you must contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage.

## **Infections and a change in temperature**

You are at higher risk of infection while you are having chemotherapy. Minor infections can become life-threatening in a matter of hours, if left untreated.

Symptoms of infection can include a high temperature (37.5°C and above), low temperature (below 36°C), shivering, sweating, sore throat, diarrhoea, discomfort when you pass urine, a cough or breathlessness. We recommend that you use a digital thermometer to check your temperature three times a day, or if you feel unwell.

**If you feel unwell, have symptoms of an infection, or your temperature is 37.5°C or above or below 36°C, contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage immediately.**

**Tel: 01865 572 192  
(24 hours a day 7 days a week)**

# What to expect when having ambulatory cyclophosphamide chemotherapy

## When you are in hospital

Your AC nurses will:

- explain your treatment to you and answer your questions
- take blood tests and carry out assessments before you start your chemotherapy. Occasionally it may not be possible to go ahead with your treatment until your blood counts are at a safe level.
- give you any other chemotherapy that is due on that day
- connect the cyclophosphamide and mesna drips and set the pump to give the chemotherapy over the required length of time
- explain to you (and your carer/s) basic information about the pump and how to look after it. You will not be expected to and must not alter the pump settings. You will be given additional separate information about the pump.
- give you tablets to take. These will include anti-sickness tablets and tablets to help prevent infections. Take all your tablets exactly as advised.
- give you information about who to contact if you need advice.

## When you are at home or in the on-site flat

Once you are away from the hospital:

- Make sure you drink at least two litres (three and a half pints) of fluid during and for the 24 hours after receiving the cyclophosphamide. It is also important to empty your bladder regularly and to try to pass urine as soon as you feel the need to go.
- Take your anti-sickness tablets and other medications required with your chemotherapy, as prescribed.
- Check your temperature every 6 hours or if you are feeling unwell or have any signs of infection.

- Contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage if you notice you are not passing urine as you would normally or your urine becomes dark.
- Contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage if you feel or are sick and this is affecting your ability to eat, drink or carry out daily tasks, is causing you problems, or if you have any signs or symptoms of bladder irritation, a raised (or low) temperature or if you become unwell in any other way.
- Contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage immediately if there is a chemotherapy spillage, if the pump signals a fault or if there is any other problem with the drips, lines, or equipment.

## **How to contact us**

For advice and to report any problems, please contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage. Make sure you mention you are a patient receiving ambulatory chemotherapy at home.

### **Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage**

Tel: **01865 572 192**

(24 hours)

Your haematology consultants, oncologist, AC nurses and cancer pharmacists will also be happy to answer your questions when they see you.

### **Ambulatory Care Nurses**

Tel: **01865 226 513**

Email: [acute.chemotherapyteam@oxnet.nhs.uk](mailto:acute.chemotherapyteam@oxnet.nhs.uk)

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.

*Making a difference across our hospitals*

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OXFORD HOSPITALS CHARITY (REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1175809)

**Oxford  
Hospitals  
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