



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Going home with ambulatory ifosfamide chemotherapy

Information for patients



You have been given this leaflet as a guide to ambulatory ifosfamide 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 ifosfamide chemotherapy?

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

Ambulatory means you are having the ifosfamide 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 ifosfamide 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 ifosfamide 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 ifosfamide. This medication helps to prevent the ifosfamide irritating your bladder. You will either have this through your central line in a separate infusion, before or after the ifosfamide, or they can be mixed together in one bag. When the dose of intravenous ifosfamide is completed you may also be given mesna tablets to take by mouth.

It is very important to stay well hydrated when receiving chemotherapy, to help clear the ifosfamide 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 ifosfamide.

Signs to look out for whilst having ambulatory ifosfamide

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 ifosfamide 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 ifosfamide.

Irritation to the brain

Ifosfamide can cause irritation to the brain. You may notice vivid dreams when the chemotherapy is running. You may also feel very drowsy or confused or you may have hallucinations. You may feel dizzy or unsteady. Rarely, this treatment can cause fits (seizures).

These symptoms may appear from a few hours to a few days after starting ifosfamide. Contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage straight away if you or those around you begin to notice you have any of these symptoms. It's important not to drive or operate machinery if you have these side effects.

These side effects usually quickly go away if the ifosfamide is stopped and it is unlikely to cause any permanent effects. However, rarely, ifosfamide can cause a loss of consciousness which can last for several days.

Bladder irritation

Ifosfamide 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 ifosfamide 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. You will also be shown how to check for small traces of blood in your urine (which you might not be able to see) and what to do if some is present (see page 9).

Feeling sick

You may feel sick for the first few days after having the ifosfamide 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 ifosfamide 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 at least twice 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.

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(24 hours a day 7 days a week)**

What to expect when having ambulatory ifosfamide 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 ifosfamide and fluid 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.
- explain to you how to check your urine for blood. You will be asked to provide a urine sample before starting your treatment, and will be given some equipment for checking your urine for blood at home.

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 ifosfamide, please let your AC nurse know.

- 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

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 ifosfamide. 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.
- Test each urine sample with the dipsticks provided and measure against the scale on the bottle for any blood in your urine. Your AC nurse will tell you how to read these results and when to report them. Information is also shown in the following table.

<p>Test result: Trace</p>	<p>Action: Make sure you are drinking enough fluids and the mesna medication is running through the pump. If you suddenly develop traces of blood in your urine, and this is present in two or more samples and was not there when we first tested your urine, you must report this to Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage.</p>
<p>Test result: +</p>	<p>Action: Make sure you are drinking enough fluids and the mesna medication is running through the pump. If a second urine sample is positive (showing + or more) you must report this to Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage.</p>
<p>Test result: ++</p>	<p>Action: Contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage immediately.</p>
<p>Test result: +++</p>	<p>Action: Contact Cancer and Haematology Centre Triage immediately.</p>

- 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 brain or bladder irritation (see pages 5 and 6), 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 drip, 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**

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information



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