

TAXOL

(ALSO CALLED PACLITAXEL)

What it Does: This chemotherapy drug interferes with cancer cell growth by damaging the building blocks of the cell (DNA or RNA) so that the cancer cells cannot continue to grow and multiply. Chemotherapy affects normal cells in the body as well as cancer cells. This is why certain side effects occur. Normal cells repair themselves faster than cancer cells; therefore, most of the side effects diminish over time when the drug is not being administered.

How it is Given: Taxol is given intravenously (by injection into a vein in the arm or port-a-cath).

Possible Side Effects and What to do About Them:

Nausea and Vomiting:

- Take prescribed medication as needed for any nausea and vomiting that may occur.
- When nauseated, sip on small amounts at a time of clear liquids such as ginger-ale, broth, or eat Jello, Popsicles, etc. Dry crackers, toast, and popcorn may also help reduce nausea.
- Avoid fatty, highly salted, or spicy foods

Low Blood Counts: Taxol may cause bone marrow depression (your blood counts to drop). Your doctor will notify you if your blood counts are low. Call your physician/nurse if you develop:

- Fever of 101 or higher and/or chills
- Any nose or gum bleeding
- Blood in your stool or urine
- Excessive bruising
- Cough or sore throat

Allergic Reaction: You will receive premedication to decrease the risk of developing an allergic reaction during your treatment. You will be closely monitored throughout your Taxol infusion. If you experience any shortness of breath, itching, or tightness in your throat – notify your nurse immediately.

Hair Loss: This drug may cause hair loss. If hair loss occurs, hair growth will begin 1-2 months after treatment is complete. In some cases, the hair will start to grow back while you are still on treatment.

- You may want to purchase a wig before your hair loss occurs in order to match your color and style. (Some insurance companies will cover the cost of a wig.)
- Turbans, hats, and scarves are quite helpful to protect the scalp..

Effects on the Heart: Taxol does not generally have an effect on the heart function, except for a possible drop in your heart rate and blood pressure during the infusion. Your nurse will be monitoring your heart rate and blood pressure while you are receiving Taxol.

Numbness and Tingling: Taxol can cause numbness and tingling in your hands and feet and/or difficulty with coordination. If you experience any of these symptoms, report them to your physician.

Joint and Muscle Pain: You may experience mild joint and muscle pain for two to three days after your treatment. If this occurs, you may take Tylenol or Ibuprofen for pain. If the pain is unrelieved, call your physician or nurse for further advice.

Diarrhea:

- Report diarrhea (3-4 loose stools/day) to your doctor/nurse.
- Avoid foods high in roughage and fibers such as raw fruits and vegetables. You may also want to avoid foods that are greasy, fried, or acidic.
- Drink plenty of fluids per day.

Fluid Retention: You may experience some swelling or weight gain after receiving Taxol infusions. Notify your physician if this should occur.