

Supportive care

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) in supportive care

This additional information leaflet provides important safety information. You may find that there are some differences between the manufacturer's information and the information from your specialist team.

It is important that this leaflet is read along with the manufacturer's patient information leaflet. Your supportive care specialist or pharmacist will explain this treatment to you and its side effects, and will be happy to answer any questions you have about your treatment.

Why have I been prescribed an NSAID?

NSAIDs are a type of painkiller which may help with inflammatory pain caused by cancer and its treatment. They are often used alongside other pain medications, such as paracetamol and opioids e.g., morphine or oxycodone. Taking NSAIDs may mean that you can reduce stronger pain medicines, which leads to fewer side effects.

Which NSAID will be prescribed?

NSAIDs which may be prescribed at The Christie include ibuprofen, naproxen, celecoxib, etoricoxib and parecoxib.

The preferred NSAIDs in supportive care are usually celecoxib or etoricoxib, which can be taken by mouth. If you are an inpatient in the hospital and have severe pain or are unable to swallow oral medication, you may be given parecoxib as an injection under the skin or as a continuous infusion over 24 hours.

How do I take these medicines?

The starting dose will vary depending on your overall health and the severity of your pain. The risk of side effects may increase with the dose and duration of use. It is therefore important that you use the lowest dose that controls your pain. You should not take these medicines for longer than is necessary to control the symptoms.

- NSAIDs should be taken regularly or as needed if the pain isn't constant.
- NSAIDs should ideally be taken with or after food. You may also be advised to take another medicine to protect your stomach from the side effects of NSAIDs. For example; omeprazole, lansoprazole or famotidine.
- Do not take more than prescribed.
- Do not take more than one type of NSAID at a time as their effects can add up causing more side effects.



How long do NSAIDs take to work?

Everyone is different. The average time for pain to reduce is an hour after taking a tablet or suppository. Injections often work faster, however it may take longer for the full effect to be achieved.

NSAIDs do not work for everyone. If there is no improvement in your pain after 7 days of regular use you should consult your supportive care specialist.

What should I tell my specialist supportive care team?

- If you are allergic to any medicines or have had any side effects from NSAIDs.
- If you are taking or have taken within the last 6 weeks any anticancer treatment (including chemotherapy, immunotherapy or targeted therapy), including clinical trial medication.
- If you are taking any other prescribed medicines, or medicines purchased 'over the counter' from the pharmacy, including herbal or complementary medicines.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you are planning to become pregnant in the future.
- If you have (or have ever had) any of the following:
 - a stomach ulcer
 - a kidney problem
 - asthma or any other breathing disorder
 - any problem with bleeding or blood clots
 - high blood pressure
 - had a heart attack, or suffer with angina
 - heart failure
 - stroke

Which medicines can interact with NSAIDs?

NSAIDs can interact with other medications. It is important to let your specialist team know if you are on any medications for other conditions, or if there are any changes to your medication.

NSAIDs can harm the kidneys, particularly if they are taken in combination with certain medicines, including anticancer treatments, such as cisplatin or methotrexate. If you are unsure whether you are at risk, contact your specialist supportive care or oncology team.

If you are scheduled to have a CT scan with intravenous contrast, speak to your specialist or oncology team who will give you advice on how to protect the kidneys and if any additional monitoring is required.

What are the side effects? Warning

NSAIDs, can affect kidney function. If a reduction in kidney function occurs suddenly, this is called acute kidney injury (AKI). 'Acute' means it has occurred over hours or days. 'Kidney injury' describes damage to the kidneys, usually with a change in the kidney function. Patients with cancer, including those who are receiving anticancer treatment, may have additional risk factors for developing AKI.

If you are unsure if you have risk factors for developing a kidney injury, please discuss with your supportive care or oncology specialist before starting to take the NSAID medication.

Your specialist supportive care team will monitor you closely during treatment, and will check your blood pressure regularly. You will also require blood tests during treatment to check that your full blood count and liver function is normal.

To reduce the risk of kidney injury, it is important to:

- attend appointments for blood tests to check kidney function
- stay hydrated by drinking plenty of clear fluids (cordial is fine)
- let your specialist team know that you are taking a NSAID prior to starting any new treatment
- follow the 'sick day rules' and contact The Christie Hotline or seek medical advice promptly if you are unwell

What if I become unwell while taking a NSAID? 'Sick day rules'

NSAIDs can mask a fever or temperature, so it is important not to delay seeking medical advice if you start to feel unwell or have signs of an infection, even if your temperature is normal.

To reduce the risk of AKI, contact The Christie Hotline or GP straight away, if you feel unwell or develop any of the following symptoms:

- vomiting when unable to keep liquids down
- nausea when you do not feel like eating and drinking
- mucositis when you have a sore mouth or throat and are unable to drink enough
- diarrhoea when you lose more water in stools than you can drink
- feeling light-headed or excessively thirsty

Avoid taking any further doses of NSAID while waiting for a medical assessment; other pain killers can be taken, such as paracetamol or opioids. Before restarting a NSAID after a period of illness, you should check with your medical team whether it is safe to restart.

What should I do if I forget or miss a dose?

If you forget a dose of your NSAID, take it as soon as you remember, unless you only remember the next day. In this case, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the usual time.

Ensure that you do not take more than the maximum prescribed daily dose.

Can I drink alcohol?

Once you are settled on a stable dose, you may drink alcohol in moderation. However, alcohol increases the risk of dehydration which can harm the kidneys, so it is important to remember to stay hydrated and drink sufficient fluids with any alcohol consumed.

Can I drive?

Yes, it is usually safe to drive while taking a NSAID. Although not common, NSAIDs may make you dizzy or drowsy. If you experience any of these symptoms do not drive, operate machinery or do any tasks, including driving that requires you to be alert.

What if I want to stop taking NSAIDs?

Over time your pain may change. It is important to regularly review whether you still need to use your NSAID medicine. If your pain improves, you should discuss stopping your medicine or reducing the dose with your specialist team as any medicine can have unwanted side effects.

If you have any problems or worries, please contact:

- Your clinical team such as your consultant's secretary or a clinical nurse specialist.
- The supportive care team **0161 446 3559**.
- The Christie pharmacy **0161 446 3432 / 3433**.

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham, Salford or Macclesfield. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week