

Breast Oncology

Pembrolizumab with nab-paclitaxel (Abraxane) or paclitaxel

This leaflet is given in addition to your **consent form(s)** and **booklet**, 'Chemotherapy - a guide for patients and their carers'.

Your treatment

Nab-paclitaxel and paclitaxel are anticancer drugs known as chemotherapy. Pembrolizumab is an anticancer drug also known as a targeted or biological therapy. This is a type of immunotherapy also known as a checkpoint inhibitor. This drug helps your immune system to find and attack cancer cells.

Pembrolizumab is given either in combination with nab-paclitaxel or paclitaxel. Your clinical team will tell you which combination of drugs you will receive.

Pembrolizumab is given into the vein (intravenously) through a fine tube (cannula) as an infusion (drip) over 30 minutes. The treatment is repeated every 21 days (3 weekly).

Nab-paclitaxel is given into the vein (intravenously) through a fine tube (cannula) as an infusion (drip) over 30 minutes once a week for 3 weeks in a 28 day cycle (3 weeks on 1 week off).

Paclitaxel is given into the vein (intravenously) through a fine tube (cannula) as an infusion (drip) over 60 minutes once a week for 3 weeks in a 28 day cycle (3 weeks on 1 week off).

Pembrolizumab may be continued as a single agent after the completion of 6-8 cycles of nab-paclitaxel or paclitaxel. In this case the pembrolizumab will be administered as an infusion (drip) every 6 weeks.

Treatment will usually continue for 2 years or until disease progression or unacceptable toxicity.

You will have a routine blood test before the start of each treatment. Occasionally we may not be able to go ahead with your treatment until your blood counts are back to a safe level. If this happens, your chemotherapy may be delayed a week.

You may be advised to have a line fitted or an implantable/subcutaneous port (portacath) to aid the delivery of your intravenous treatment. This will be organised by the clinic if it is required. Your line or port needs to be removed after all your intravenous treatments have finished. If you have not received an appointment for this, please contact the procedure team on **0161 446 3916**.

This treatment can have serious or possibly life-threatening side effects. It is very important that you report side effects straight away.



You are also vulnerable to infection while you are having chemotherapy. Minor infections can become life-threatening in a matter of hours if left untreated. Symptoms of infection include fever, shivering, sweats, sore throat, diarrhoea, discomfort when you pass urine, cough or breathlessness. We recommend that you use a digital thermometer so you can check your temperature. You can buy one from your local chemist.

If you feel unwell, you have symptoms of an infection or your temperature is 37.5°C or above, or below 36°C, contact The Christie Hotline straight away on 0161 446 3658 (lines open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

Possible side effects

See Cancer Research UK consent form.

You should have been given a copy of this consent form before you started treatment but it can also be found by visiting www.cancerresearchuk.org and searching 'Consent forms for SACT (Systemic Anticancer Therapy)'.

See 'Chemotherapy – a guide for patients and their carers'

You should have been given a copy of this booklet. You can also see this on The Christie website, visit www.christie.nhs.uk

Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please contact your consultant's secretary or ring:

Administration enquiries **0161 918 7606/7610**
Chemotherapy nurse **0161 918 7171**
Clinical trials unit **0161 918 7663**

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