

## Niraparib (Zejula®)

This leaflet is offered as a guide to you and your family. Niraparib (Zejula®) is a systemic anti-cancer therapy. This group of drugs targets and interferes with the processes in the cells that cause cancer to grow. The possible benefits of treatment vary; for some people anti-cancer therapy may reduce the risk of the cancer coming back, for others it may control the cancer and its symptoms. Your doctor or nurse will be happy to answer any questions you have about your treatment.

### Your treatment

Niraparib is given by mouth as tablets once a day continuously. You can remain on the tablets for as long as you are benefitting from the treatment and the side effects are tolerated up to a maximum of 3 years.

The tablets should be taken daily, without food (at least 1 hour before or 2 hours after a meal) or with only a light meal. Try to take them at the same times each day. If you forget to take a dose, do not double up, just take your next dose when it is due. Taking niraparib at bedtime may help you to manage nausea. Swallow the tablets whole, with some water. Do not chew or crush the tablets.

### Increased risk of serious infection:

You are vulnerable to infection while you are having this treatment. 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.**

### Drug interactions

Some medicines interact with niraparib, either making it less effective or more likely to cause side effects. Please check with your GP and pharmacist that any new medicines are safe, or contact us. Drugs which may need to be avoided include atorvastatin, simvastatin and metformin. If you are in any doubt you should contact The Christie.

### Possible side effects

This treatment can cause many different side effects. Some are more likely to occur than others. Everyone is different and not everyone gets all side effects. Most side effects are usually temporary, but in some rare cases they can be life threatening. It is important to tell the hospital doctor or nurse about any side effects so that these can be monitored and, where possible treated. If your side effects are severe, you may need to stop your tablets, have a longer break from treatment, or have your dose reduced. A small number of people do not tolerate this treatment.



## Common side effects (more than 1 in 100)

- **Anaemia (low number of red blood cells)**

While having this treatment you may become anaemic. This may make you feel tired and breathless. Let your doctor or nurse know if these symptoms are a problem. You may need a blood transfusion.

- **Bruising or bleeding**

This treatment can reduce the production of platelets which help the blood clot. Let your doctor know if you have any unexplained bruising or bleeding, such as nosebleeds, bloodspots or rashes on the skin, and bleeding gums. You may need a platelet transfusion.

- **Mild nausea and vomiting (sickness)**

You may notice some mild sickness while taking niraparib. You will be given some anti-sickness tablets to take at home if you need to. If you continue to feel or be sick, contact your GP or this hospital, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

- **Lethargy**

Niraparib may make you feel tired and lacking in energy. It can be frustrating when you feel unable to cope with routine tasks. If you do feel tired, take rest and get help with household chores. If necessary, take time off work. Gentle exercise such as walking can be beneficial.

- **Loss of appetite/ change in taste/ heartburn**

A dietitian or specialist nurse can give you advice and tips on diet and how to improve your appetite. Let your doctor or nurse know if this is a problem.

- **Headache or dizziness**

You may experience dizziness or headaches. If you experience these symptoms you should be cautious about driving or using machines.

- **Diarrhoea**

Diarrhoea is a common side effect of your treatment. If you have watery diarrhoea you should immediately take the anti-diarrhoea treatment that the doctor has prescribed for you. This is loperamide dispensed by The Christie pharmacy. Follow the doctor's instructions EXACTLY.

If you have an increase of more than 4 bowel movements each day compared to pre-treatment, or any diarrhoea at night, please ring The Christie Hotline for advice.

- **High blood pressure**

Niraparib may cause high blood pressure. We may check your blood pressure monthly during the first year of treatment with niraparib and periodically thereafter. We may prescribe medicine to reduce blood pressure if this occurs and a reduction in the dose of niraparib may be considered.

- **Sensitivity to the sun**

Niraparib can make your skin more sensitive to the sun than usual. Sit in the shade, avoid too much sun and use a sunblock cream.

- **Difficulty in sleeping**

You may find it difficult to sleep whilst taking niraparib. Please inform your doctor if you are struggling sleeping.

- **Skin rash and dry skin**

You may get a mild skin rash. Tell your doctor or nurse if this happens. It is very important to contact your doctor straightaway if you get a severe skin rash.

## **Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 100)**

- **Stomach pain**

Get medical help right away if you have any of the following side effects: severe/persistent stomach/abdominal pain, signs of bleeding (such as bloody/black stools, vomit that looks like coffee grounds, coughing/vomiting up blood).

- **Sore mouth**

Your mouth may become sore or dry, or you may notice small mouth ulcers during this treatment. Drinking plenty of fluids and cleaning your teeth regularly and gently with a soft toothbrush can help to reduce the risk of this happening. We can prescribe a mouthwash for you to use during treatment. You can dilute this with water if your mouth is sore. Ask your doctor or nurse for further advice. There is also general mouth care information in the chemotherapy booklet. If you continue to have a sore mouth, please contact The Christie Hotline.

- **Myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) / acute myeloid leukaemia (AML)**

Low blood cell counts may be a sign of a more serious problem with bone marrow such as myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) and acute myeloid leukaemia (AML). These problems are rare; however your doctor may want to test your bone marrow to check.

## **Rare side effects (less than 1 in 1,000)**

Posterior reversible encephalopathy (PRES) in patients receiving niraparib is a rare, reversible, neurological disorder which can present with rapidly evolving symptoms including seizure, headache, altered mental status, visual disturbances and sometimes, but not always, associated with hypertension (high blood pressure). If any such symptoms are present please contact The Christie Hotline or ring **999**.

## **Serious and potentially life-threatening side effects**

In a small proportion of patients treatment can result in very severe side effects which may rarely result in death. The team caring for you will discuss the risk of these side effects with you.

## **Late side effects**

Some side effects may become evident only after a number of years. In reaching any decision with you about treatment, the potential benefit you receive from treatment will be weighed against the risks of serious long term side effects to the heart, lungs, kidneys and bone marrow. With some drugs there is also a small but definite risk of developing another cancer. If any of these problems specifically applies to you, the doctor will discuss these with you and note this on your consent form.

## Sex, contraception and fertility

**Protecting your partner and contraception:** We recommend that you or your partner use a condom during sexual intercourse while you are having treatment and for 1 month after receiving the last dose. This will also protect you and your partner from any drugs that may be present in semen and in the vagina.

**Fertility:** This treatment may affect your ability to have children. Your doctor or nurse should have discussed this with you, if applicable. If not, please ask them before you start treatment.

## Contacts

If you have any general questions or concerns about your treatment, please ring the area where you are having treatment:

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

For urgent advice ring The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Your consultant is: .....

Your hospital number is: .....

Your key worker is: .....

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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