

## Afatinib (Giotrif®)

Afatinib is a type of anti-cancer treatment called a targeted therapy. The aim of this treatment is to control the cancer and its symptoms. Your doctor or nurse will be happy to answer any questions you may have about your treatment. You may find it useful to refer to the booklet 'Chemotherapy, a guide' which gives general information on staying well during anti-cancer treatments.

### Your treatment

Your doctor has prescribed you a treatment called afatinib (Giotrif®) which is a tablet and is taken by mouth.

**The recommended dose is 40mg once daily but your doctor can adjust it if needed.**

Take a single tablet each morning with a glass of water at least one hour before, (or three hours after) a meal. Do not chew, break or crush the tablet. If you forget to take a dose and the next scheduled dose is within 8 hours, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the usual time. If the next dose is to be taken in more than 8 hours, take your missed dose as soon as you remember it. Then carry on taking your tablets as usual and tell your doctor about it.

While you are taking afatinib (Giotrif®), we will review you at The Christie on a regular basis (usually monthly). A chest X-ray and blood tests will be done before the review with the doctor, specialist nurse or pharmacist. Treatment will be dispensed on the same day after this review if you are responding to the treatment.

Tell your doctor about all your current medication as this may influence the levels of afatinib in the blood and the risk of side effects. Discuss any herbal remedies such as St John's Wort with your doctor **before** taking them, as these may also interfere with your treatment.

**We strongly advise current smokers to stop smoking while having this treatment.**

If you would like help with stopping smoking, please let your doctor or nurse know and they can arrange support for you.

This treatment can have serious or possibly life-threatening side effects. It is very important that you report side effects straight away. Don't delay, if you feel unwell, please ring The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658**. The lines are open 24 hours a day.

### Flu vaccinations

**Is it alright for me to have a flu jab during the time I'm having chemotherapy?**

It's safe to have a flu jab, but depending on the sort of chemotherapy you have had, it may not give quite as much protection against infection as usual.



Some patients may need two vaccinations. However, if you're thinking of having any other vaccinations, do check with your Christie doctor first, because some vaccines should be avoided.

### **COVID-19 vaccinations**

We advise that all patients receive a COVID-19 vaccination when this is offered. Your doctor will discuss this with you the best time to have this.

### **Possible side effects**

Anti-cancer treatment 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. It is important to tell your hospital doctor or nurse about any side effects so they can be monitored and, where possible, treated.

### **Common side effects (more than 1 in 10)**

#### **• Skin reactions**

It is very common for a rash to occur with afatinib. In general, the rash is usually mild to moderate and can be worse in areas exposed to sun.

Avoid exposure to direct sunlight. If you are in the sun cover up your skin as much as possible using protective clothing and a high factor sunblock (SPF 30 or 50) as you may be more at risk to the effects of the sun.

When you are washing, use unperfumed soaps and shampoos such as baby products. Limit exposure to water and soaps because this can aggravate any rash already present. Keep your skin moisturised using moisturisers (E45® or Aveeno®) at least once a day.

If the rash becomes red, painful or develops an 'acne-like' appearance please call this hospital. Sometimes the dose may need to be changed or delayed for a week or two. If you develop any signs that the rash is infected then the medical team will start a course of antibiotics.

**Do not** use products to treat acne.

**Do not stop taking afatinib unless it has been discussed with your medical team at The Christie.**

It is also very common for itching to occur while using afatinib. If your skin does become itchy while taking afatinib use an antihistamine, such as cetirizine which will be prescribed for you by your doctor or nurse specialist.

A rarer side effect is hand foot syndrome (palmar-plantar syndrome). This is soreness, redness and peeling of the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet. You might also feel tingling, numbness and dryness.

#### **• Nail infection (Warning!)**

Another common skin-related side effect of afatinib is nail infection which is an inflammation of the skin surrounding the finger or toenails. Maintain good hand hygiene and use moisturiser creams. Avoid aggressive manicures and nail trauma. Inform your doctor at your next visit of any nail discomfort you have experienced. You might also notice a change in the shape or the colour of the nails.

#### **• Decreased appetite**

You may lose your appetite and find eating large meals more difficult. It is best to try to eat smaller portions but do carry on trying to eat something even if you do not feel very hungry. Ask your nurse or doctor for advice on what to eat if this is causing you problems or you have unexpected weight loss. Ask staff for a copy of the booklet 'Eating - help yourself'.

- **Nausea and vomiting (sickness) (common)**

The severity of this varies from person to person. Anti-sickness medication may be given along with your treatment to prevent this. You will also be given anti-sickness tablets to take at home. If you continue to feel or be sick, contact your GP or The Christie, because your anti-sickness medication may need to be changed or increased.

- **Diarrhoea (Warning!)**

Diarrhoea is a common side effect with afatinib. If you experience diarrhoea while you are having treatment, use anti-diarrhoea tablets as directed by the medical team such as loperamide. You can also buy these from a pharmacy or get a prescription from your GP for a temporary period until this is resolved. If the problem persists, it is important that you contact The Christie. If you experience any diarrhoea please tell your hospital doctor, as the treatment dose may need to be changed or delayed. **If you develop severe diarrhoea it is important to contact the Christie hotline on 0161 446 3658 straight away. Don't delay!**

Ask the staff for a copy of the booklet 'Eating: help yourself' which has some useful ideas about diet when you are having treatment.

- **Sore mouth (Warning!)**

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 on **0161 446 3658**.

- **Eye irritation (Warning!) (Uncommon)**

This treatment can cause eye irritations, such as dry eyes or conjunctivitis (infection in the eyes). Eye drops can sometimes improve these symptoms. Wearing contact lenses can make the symptoms worse, so we advise not to wear lenses while taking afatinib. Severe eye pain and redness is a rare side effect. Tell your doctor or nurse straight away if you have this or watery eyes, blurred vision and sensitivity to light. You may need urgent treatment. If you experience eye problems please contact us.

- **Bleeding from the nose (Warning!)**

Afatinib can occasionally cause bleeding from the nose. If you have this side effect, please contact The Christie Hotline immediately.

## **Uncommon side effects (less than 1 in 10)**

- **Inflammation of the bladder lining**

Please contact the team if you develop pain, burning or stinging when you urinate; or if needing to urinate more often and urgently than normal. Other signs of inflammation may include urine that's dark, cloudy or strong smelling or pain low down in your tummy.

- **Strange taste**

Occasionally during treatment you may experience a strange taste, sometimes described as metallic or bitter. A strongly flavoured sweet or mint will help to disguise this. Occasionally some patients report they have lost their sense of taste during treatment.

- **Abdominal pain**

You may experience pain in your upper abdomen, the stomach area. It is usually mild and not serious but it may become more severe. It may impact upon your eating habits and if it becomes a problem, tablets to reduce acid production may be helpful and can be bought from the pharmacy or prescribed by your GP.

- **Fatigue**

This treatment can 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, rest and get help with household chores. Gentle exercise such as a daily walk can be beneficial. Please ask for a copy of our exercise booklet 'Be active stay active'.

- **Liver damage**

Afatinib can rarely cause damage to the liver. If your blood tests indicate severe changes in your liver function, we may suggest a change in the dose, a delay or stopping treatment.

- **Kidney damage**

This treatment can rarely cause damage to the kidney. This is usually mild and unlikely to cause symptoms. If your blood tests indicate severe damage to the kidney function, we may suggest a change on the dose or if needed stopping treatment.

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

- **Inflammation of the Pancreas**

Please contact us if you develop severe abdominal pain, nausea, a high temperature or diarrhoea.

- **Interstitial lung disease**

A rare side effect from afatinib is a form of lung irritation called interstitial lung disease. If you develop symptoms such as sudden difficulty breathing with a cough or fever, contact The Christie Hotline immediately on **0161 446 3658**.

- **Increased risk of infection (common)**

It is uncommon to develop an infection. 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.**

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

In a small proportion of patients anti-cancer 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.

## **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 the course of chemotherapy. Chemotherapy is dangerous to unborn babies and this will also protect you and your partner from any chemotherapy drugs that may be present in semen and in the vagina. If you suspect that you may be pregnant please tell your doctor immediately.

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

## 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.

## Contacts

For urgent advice ring The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658** (24 hours).

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**

Lung cancer nurse team - **0161 918 2595**

Your doctor's secretary .....**0161** .....

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