

## Gemcitabine (Gemzar)

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### About This Drug

Gemcitabine is used to treat cancer. It is given in the vein (IV).

### Possible Side Effects

- Bone marrow suppression. This is a decrease in the number of white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets. This may raise your risk of infection, make you tired and weak (fatigue), and raise your risk of bleeding.
- Nausea and vomiting (throwing up)
- Fever
- Swelling of your legs, ankles and/or feet
- Changes in your liver function
- Increased protein in your urine
- Blood in your urine
- Trouble breathing
- Rash

**Note:** Each of the side effects above was reported in 20% or greater of patients treated with gemcitabine. Not all possible side effects are included above.

### Warnings and Precautions

- Severe bone marrow suppression
- Inflammation (swelling) of the lungs and/or thickening of the lung tissues, which may be life-threatening. You may have a dry cough or trouble breathing.
- Changes in your liver function, which can cause liver failure and may be life-threatening
- If you have received radiation treatments, your skin may become red and/or you may develop soreness of the mouth and throat after gemcitabine. This reaction is called “radiation recall.” Your body is recalling, or remembering, that it had radiation therapy.
- A syndrome where fluid from your veins can leak into your tissues. This can cause a decrease in your blood protein level and blood pressure and fluid can accumulate in your tissues and/or lungs.
- A syndrome can occur that affects your red blood cells, platelets, and blood vessels in your kidneys, which can cause kidney failure and be life-threatening.

- Changes in your central nervous system can happen. The central nervous system is made up of your brain and spinal cord. You could feel extreme tiredness, agitation, confusion, hallucinations (see or hear things that are not there), have trouble understanding or speaking, loss of control of your bowels or bladder, eyesight changes, numbness, or lack of strength to your arms, legs, face, or body, seizures or coma. If you start to have any of these symptoms let your doctor know right away.

**Note:** Some of the side effects above are very rare. If you have concerns and/or questions, please discuss them with your medical team.

## Important Information

- This drug may be present in the saliva, tears, sweat, urine, stool, vomit, semen, and vaginal secretions. Talk to your doctor and/or your nurse about the necessary precautions to take during this time.

## Treating Side Effects

- Manage tiredness by pacing your activities for the day.
- Be sure to include periods of rest between energy-draining activities.
- To decrease the risk of infection, wash your hands regularly.
- Avoid close contact with people who have a cold, the flu, or other infections.
- Take your temperature as your doctor or nurse tells you, and whenever you feel like you may have a fever.
- To help decrease the risk of bleeding, use a soft toothbrush. Check with your nurse before using dental floss.
- Be very careful when using knives or tools.
- Use an electric shaver instead of a razor.
- Drink plenty of fluids (a minimum of eight glasses per day is recommended).
- If you throw up or have loose bowel movements, you should drink more fluids so that you do not become dehydrated (lack of water in the body from losing too much fluid).
- To help with nausea and vomiting, eat small, frequent meals instead of three large meals a day. Choose foods and drinks that are at room temperature. Ask your nurse or doctor about other helpful tips and medicine that is available to help stop or lessen these symptoms.
- If you get a rash do not put anything on it unless your doctor or nurse says you may. Keep the area around the rash clean and dry. Ask your doctor for medicine if your rash bothers you.
- If you received radiation, and your skin becomes red or irritated again, or you develop soreness of the mouth and throat, follow the same care instructions you did during radiation treatment. Be sure to tell the nurse or doctor administering your chemotherapy about your skin changes.

## Food and Drug Interactions

- There are no known interactions of gemcitabine with food.



- This drug may interact with other medicines. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all the prescription and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements (vitamins, minerals, herbs, and others) that you are taking at this time. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new prescription or over-the-counter medicines, or dietary supplements to make sure that there are no interactions.

## When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any of these symptoms and/or any new or unusual symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
- Chills
- Tiredness that interferes with your daily activities
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Pain in your chest or abdomen
- Dry cough
- Wheezing and/or trouble breathing
- Confusion and/or agitation
- Changes in mood
- Symptoms of a seizure such as confusion, blacking out, passing out, loss of hearing or vision, blurred vision, unusual smells or tastes (such as burning rubber), trouble talking, tremors or shaking in parts or all of the body, repeated body movements, tense muscles that do not relax, and loss of control of urine and bowels. **If you or your family member suspects you are having a seizure, call 911 right away.**
- Hallucinations
- Trouble understanding or speaking
- Blurry vision or changes in your eyesight
- Numbness or lack of strength to your arms, legs, face, or body
- Easy bleeding or bruising
- Nausea that stops you from eating or drinking and/or is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Throwing up more than 3 times a day
- Swelling of your legs, ankles, and/or feet
- Weight gain of 5 pounds in one week (fluid retention)
- Blood in urine
- Decreased urine or very dark urine
- Foamy or bubbly-looking urine
- A new rash/itching or a rash that is not relieved by prescribed medicines
- Signs of possible liver problems: dark urine, pale bowel movements, bad stomach pain, feeling very tired and weak, unusual itching, or yellowing of the eyes or skin
- If you think you may be pregnant or may have impregnated your partner

## Reproduction Warnings



- **Pregnancy warning:** This drug can have harmful effects on the unborn baby. Women of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for 6 months after treatment. Men with female partners of childbearing potential should use effective methods of birth control during your cancer treatment and for 3 months after your cancer treatment. Let your doctor know right away if you think you may be pregnant or may have impregnated your partner.
- **Breastfeeding warning:** Women should not breastfeed during treatment and for at least 1 week after treatment because this drug could enter the breast milk and cause harm to a breastfeeding baby.
- **Fertility warning:** In men, this drug may affect your ability to have children in the future. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you plan to have children. Ask for information on sperm banking.

Revised January 2021

