

Gemcitabine Treatment

Gemcitabine is a chemotherapy drug used to treat bladder cancer by killing cancer cells. It is placed directly into the bladder so patients have fewer side effects than if they had systemic chemotherapy. Gemcitabine should not be used in patients who have a weak immune system.

Before the Treatment

You do not need to follow a special diet or restrict activities before treatment. You may want to limit fluids the morning or day of treatment so your bladder fills less quickly. This will allow you to hold the treatment in your bladder longer more comfortably.

How it is Given

A catheter is placed into the bladder and the medicine is given through the catheter. In most cases the catheter is removed before you go home.

The first series of treatments is one treatment a week for 6 weeks. The next series typically consists of a treatment once a week for 3 weeks. Treatments may be given every few months. How often you need treatment will be determined by your doctor. The treatments are given at the Infusion Center at Bronson Methodist Hospital.

After the Treatment

- Try to hold the medicine in your bladder for 1.5 hours (90 minutes.) If you can't hold it for that long, that's okay. Do not hold the treatment longer than 1.5 hr.
- Men should sit down to urinate the first time you urinate after having the treatment. This will help avoid splashing of urine.
- Flush the toilet twice after the first time you urinate.
- Wash your hands and perineum (women) or end of the penis (men) with soap and water right away after urinating.
- Remove and wash clothes right away if they are soiled with urine.
- Avoid sexual activity for 24 hours following each treatment. Use a condom any other time during treatment and for 1 week after treatment ends.

What to Expect after Treatment

Side effects are usually mild and go away within a few days. Rarely, more severe side effects occur.

Common side effects include:

- Feeling that you need to urinate right away
- Need to urinate often
- Burning with urination
- Bladder discomfort
- Blood in the urine
- Feeling tired
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Rash

Uncommon side effects include:

- Urinary tract infection
- A lot of blood in the urine (with clots)
- Fever over 101.5°F

Talk to your doctor if you cannot manage the side effects. Call the office at (269) 349-9745 right away, if you have a fever over 101.5°F or a lot of blood in your urine for more than 24 hours.