

Medical Oncology

Drug Information Sheet

Pemetrexed (Alimta): a drug to treat your cancer.

How will you get this drug? A Cancer Center nurse will give this drug to you through an IV or your port.

Pre-treatment directions:

- You may be prescribed medicines to lower risks of harmful side effects:
 - Take folic acid every day by mouth for 7 days before starting *Pemetrexed (Alimta)* and for 21 days after the last dose of *Pemetrexed (Alimta)*.
 - Take a steroid (dexamethasone) by mouth as directed, starting one day before treatment. Take in the morning with food.
 - A shot of Vitamin B12 into the muscle – given same day as your first dose of *Pemetrexed (Alimta)* and then every 9 weeks during treatment.

What should I avoid while getting *Pemetrexed (Alimta)*?

- Talk to your doctor before taking nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicines
 - Ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil)
 - Naproxen (Aleve)
 - Aspirin
 - Celecoxib (Celebrex)
 - Diclofenac (Cambia, Cataflam, Voltaren)
 - Do NOT use for 2 days before, the day of and 2 days after treatment with *Pemetrexed (Alimta)*.
- Do NOT use Echinacea.

You **MAY OR MAY NOT** experience the side effects listed below

Possible Side Effects:	What to do:
Fatigue or weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may be more tired than usual or have less energy. • Stay as active as possible, but know it is okay to rest as needed. • Try to do some activity every day. • Plan your activities, and do them at a time of day when you feel more energetic. • Avoid driving or doing other tasks that call for you to be alert.
Nausea/vomiting Decreased appetite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take nausea medicine as instructed. Let your doctor know if it is not working for you. • Eat smaller, frequent meals. • Try liquid nutrition supplements (Boost, Ensure). • A dietitian is available to talk with you.

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Possible Side Effects:	What to do:
<i>Pemetrexed (Alimta)</i> will be in urine and stool for 48 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caregivers will need to handle soiled linens and clothing wearing gloves or using a bag as a barrier. Keep your soiled items separate from others' dirty laundry and wash right away. Women who are pregnant should not handle your soiled clothing or linens. Wash any skin that body waste has touched with soap and water. You may use the same toilet that you normally use. If the toilet or toilet seat becomes dirty with urine, stool or vomit, clean the surfaces before other people use the toilet Wash hands with soap and water after using the toilet. It is safe to hug and kiss.
Avoid pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women should not become pregnant and men should not get a partner pregnant while taking <i>Pemetrexed (Alimta)</i>. This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away. Use birth control that you can trust to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug and for 6 months after stopping this drug. If you or your sex partner gets pregnant while taking this drug or within 6 months after stopping this drug, call your doctor right away. May cause fertility problems.

Less common side effects that may happen

Less common side effects	What to do:
Increased risk for infection due to decreased blood counts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid contact with people who have infections, colds or flu. Wash your hands often. Report chills or a fever of 100.4° or higher to your doctor right away, day or night. Report any signs or symptoms of infection, such as cough, burning with urination, skin redness or sores. Call your doctor before taking any medicine for a fever or chills.
Lower than normal red blood cells Anemia	<p>Call you doctor if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ shortness of breath with activity ○ fatigue ○ dizziness ○ fast heartbeat or a heartbeat that does not feel normal ○ headache

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Less common side effects	What to do:
<p>Increased risk for bleeding due to decreased blood counts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report signs of bleeding or bruising. • Avoid taking aspirin or aspirin products unless your doctor tells you to take it. • Use soft toothbrush. • Use electric razor. • Talk to your doctor before any scheduled medical or dental procedures. • Call your doctor if you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Severe headache. ○ Blood in stools or urine. ○ Bleeding for a long period. ○ Uncontrolled bleeding ○ Bruising
<p>Severe skin and mouth reactions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a moisturizing cream free from alcohol, perfume or dye at least twice a day. • Take steroid <i>Dexamethasone (Decadron)</i> as prescribed. • When outside, use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun. Choose mild soaps. • Use tepid water, rather than hot water. • Wear loose-fitting cotton clothing • Apply cool, wet cloth to soothe skin • Avoid using perfumes and cologne. • Avoid rubbing and scratching • Call your doctor if you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A skin rash ○ Red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin ○ Red or irritated eyes ○ Sores in your mouth, throat, nose or eyes
<p>Allergic reactions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call the nurse right away for unusual feelings, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ hot or flushed face and neck ○ fever ○ chills ○ pain in the abdomen or back ○ trouble breathing or wheezing ○ chest tightness ○ swelling of your face, lips, or tongue ○ a rash ○ itching ○ hives ○ cough ○ runny or stuffy nose • Call 911 and go to the Emergency Department right away if you have any symptoms after you return home

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Less common side effects	What to do:
Changes in kidney function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kidney function can be affected. • Electrolytes and kidney function will be checked. • Dose may be held or adjusted if kidney function is decreased. • Talk to you doctor before taking NSAIDs (Ibuprofen, Motrin, Aleve). • To help maintain good kidney function stay well hydrated with water and non-caffeine liquids. • Notify your doctor if you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ changes in mood or confusion ○ smaller amount of urine than normal ○ blood in urine ○ swelling in ankles ○ trouble emptying your bladder ○ weight gain ○ painful urination
Lung or breathing problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call your doctor if you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a new or worsening cough ○ shortness of breath ○ difficulty breathing ○ low oxygen levels
Skin problems in areas where you had radiation (weeks to years in the past)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ rash that looks like a sunburn in an area that was treated with radiation ○ acne ○ blisters that ooze or peel ○ itching or swelling • Choose mild soaps. • Use sunscreen • Wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun
These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor.	