



Gemcitabine Hydrochloride

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About your treatment

Your doctor has ordered the drug gemcitabine to help treat your illness. The drug is given by injection into your vein.

This medication is used to treat:

- adenocarcinoma of the pancreas

This medication is sometimes prescribed for other uses; ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

Gemcitabine is in a class of drugs known as pyrimidine analogs; it slows or stops the growth of cancer cells. The length of treatment depends on the types of drugs you are taking, how well your body responds to them, and the type of cancer you have.

Precautions

Before taking gemcitabine,

- tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are allergic to gemcitabine or any other drugs.
- tell your doctor and pharmacist what prescription and nonprescription medications you are taking, especially aspirin and vitamins.
- tell your doctor if you have or have ever had liver or kidney disease.
- you should know that gemcitabine may interfere with the normal menstrual cycle (period) in women and may stop sperm production in men. However, you should not assume that you cannot get pregnant or that you cannot get someone else pregnant. Women who are pregnant or breast-feeding should tell their doctors before they begin taking this drug. You should not plan to have children while receiving chemotherapy or for a while after treatments. (Talk to your doctor for further details.) Use a reliable method of birth control to prevent pregnancy. Gemcitabine may harm the fetus.
- do not have any vaccinations (e.g., measles or flu shots) without talking to your doctor.

Side effects

Side effects from gemcitabine are common and include:

- loss of appetite
- thinned or brittle hair
- diarrhea
- constipation
- nausea
- vomiting

Tell your doctor if either of these symptoms is severe or lasts for several hours:

- mouth blistering
- fatigue

If you experience any of the following symptoms, call your doctor immediately:

- unusual bruising or bleeding
- tingling, numbness, or pain
- dizziness
- fever
- chills
- cough
- sore throat
- difficulty swallowing
- muscle aches
- bone pain
- severe vomiting
- change in normal bowel habits for more than 2 days
- red, itchy rash
- swelling of the feet or ankles or overall puffiness
- shortness of breath

If you experience a serious side effect, you or your doctor may send a report to the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program online [at <http://www.fda.gov/MedWatch/index.html>] or by phone [1-800-332-1088].

In case of emergency/overdose

In case of overdose, call your local poison control center at 1-800-222-1222. If the victim has collapsed or is not breathing, call local emergency services at 911.

Special instructions

- The most common side effect of gemcitabine is a decrease in the number of blood cells. Your doctor may order tests before, during, and after your treatment to see if your blood cells are affected by the drug.

Brand names

- Gemzar®

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