

# Gemcitabine

**Care Team Contact Information:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pharmacy Contact Information:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Diagnosis:** \_\_\_\_\_

- This treatment is often used for many types of cancer.
- It may also be used for other reasons.

**Goal of Treatment:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Treatment may continue for a certain time period, until it no longer works, or until side effects are no longer controlled.

## Treatment Regimen

Treatment Name	How the Treatment Works	How the Treatment is Given
Gemcitabine (jem-SY-tuh-been): Gemzar (JEM-zar)	Stops cancer cells from making the instructions they need to grow and multiply, causing the cells to die.	Infusion into a vein (intravenous (IV) infusion).

## Treatment Administration and Schedule

- Treatment is typically repeated every 2, 3 or 4 weeks. This length of time is called a “cycle”.
- Gemcitabine is often given in combination with other treatments. Talk with your care team about your exact treatment and schedule.

**Option #1: Every 2 Weeks**

- Gemcitabine is given on Day 1.

Treatment Name	Cycle 1								Next Cycle
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	...	Day 14	Day 1
Gemcitabine	✓								✓

**Option #2: Every 3 Weeks**

- Gemcitabine is given on Days 1 and 8.

Treatment Name	Cycle 1								Next Cycle
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	...	Day 8	...	Day 21	Day 1
Gemcitabine	✓					✓			✓

## Treatment Administration and Schedule (Continued)

**Option #3: Every 4 Weeks**

- Gemcitabine is given on Days 1, 8, and 15.

Treatment Name	Cycle 1								Next Cycle
	Day 1	Day 2	...	Day 8	...	Day 15	...	Day 28	Day 1
Gemcitabine	✓			✓		✓			✓

## Appointments

Appointments may include regular check-ups with your care team, treatment appointments, lab visits, and imaging tests. It's important to keep your appointments whenever you can. If you miss any appointments, call your care provider as soon as possible to reschedule your appointment.

## Supportive Care to Prevent and Treat Side Effects

Description	Supportive Care Given at the Clinic or Hospital	Supportive Care Taken at Home
To help prevent or treat nausea and vomiting	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Other	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Common Side Effects

Side Effect	Important Information
<p>Low White Blood Cell (WBC) Count (Neutropenia) and Increased Risk of Infection</p>	<p>Description: WBCs help protect your body from infections. A low WBC count increases your risk of infection.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash your hands often and bathe regularly.</li> <li>• Avoid crowded places and close contact with people who are sick.</li> <li>• Follow food safety and wound care advice from your care team.</li> <li>• Your care team may prescribe medicine to help your WBCs recover.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher</li> <li>• Chills</li> <li>• New or worsening cough or sore throat</li> <li>• Painful urination or signs of a urinary infection</li> <li>• Feeling much more tired than usual</li> <li>• Red, swollen, warm, or painful areas on the skin (possible skin infection)</li> </ul>
<p>Low Platelet Count (Thrombocytopenia)</p>	<p>Description: Platelets help your blood clot and wounds heal. A low platelet count increases your risk of bruising and bleeding.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blow your nose gently and avoid picking it.</li> <li>• Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush and keep good oral hygiene.</li> <li>• Use an electric razor for shaving and a nail file instead of nail clippers.</li> <li>• Avoid over-the-counter medicines that can increase bleeding risk (for example, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen).</li> <li>• Talk with your care team or dentist before medical or dental procedures — you may need to pause treatment.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A nosebleed lasting more than 5 minutes despite pressure</li> <li>• A cut that continues to bleed</li> <li>• Heavy gum bleeding when brushing or flossing</li> <li>• Sudden or severe headache</li> <li>• Blood in your urine or stool</li> <li>• Blood in your spit after coughing</li> </ul>
<p>Low Red Blood Cell (RBC) Count and Hemoglobin (Hgb) (Anemia)</p>	<p>Description: RBCs and Hgb carry oxygen to your body’s tissues and remove carbon dioxide. Low RBC or Hgb (anemia) can make you feel weak, very tired, or look pale.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim for 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night.</li> <li>• Do not drive, operate heavy machinery, or do other dangerous activities if you are very tired.</li> <li>• Balance activity and rest — stay as active as you can, but rest when needed.</li> <li>• Eat a balanced diet and follow any nutrition or supplement advice from your care team.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Dizziness or fainting</li> <li>• Fast or irregular heartbeats</li> <li>• Sudden or severe headache</li> </ul>

<p>Fever and Flu-like Symptoms</p>	<p>Description: Fever and flu-like symptoms often occur after gemcitabine infusions. Symptoms such as fever, chills, fatigue, and muscle aches typically begin within a few hours after the infusion and last about 1 to 2 days.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your temperature if you feel like you have a fever.</li> <li>• Your care team may recommend medicines to treat your fever.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher</li> <li>• Fever lasting for more than 3 days</li> <li>• Any signs of infection, such as a persistent cough, shortness of breath, or pain</li> </ul>
<p>Fatigue</p>	<p>Description: Fatigue is a constant and sometimes strong feeling of tiredness.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Routine exercise can help reduce fatigue. Talk with your care team to find the right type and amount of activity for you.</li> <li>• Ask family and friends for help with daily tasks and for emotional support.</li> <li>• Try healthy ways to feel better, such as meditation, journaling, yoga, or guided imagery, to reduce anxiety and improve well-being.</li> <li>• Aim for 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night. Limit daytime naps to help you sleep better at night.</li> <li>• Do not drive, operate heavy machinery, or do other potentially dangerous activities if you are very tired.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tiredness that affects your daily life or prevents you from doing normal activities</li> <li>• Tiredness that does not get better with rest</li> <li>• Dizziness or weakness along with severe tiredness</li> </ul>
<p>Your Body May Hold Too Much Fluid (Fluid Retention) Leading to Swelling (Edema)</p>	<p>Description: Fluid retention (edema) is swelling caused by excess fluid in body tissues, often seen in the legs, ankles, feet, hands, or abdomen. It can cause tightness, weight gain, and discomfort.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weigh yourself daily and keep a record to notice sudden weight gain.</li> <li>• Elevate swollen legs when sitting and avoid standing for long periods.</li> <li>• Wear compression stockings if your care team recommends them.</li> <li>• Limit salt (sodium) intake and follow any fluid restrictions your care team gives.</li> <li>• Stay active and do gentle movement to improve circulation.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swelling that suddenly worsens or spreads to other areas</li> <li>• Pain, redness, or warmth in the affected area</li> <li>• Signs of shortness of breath or difficulty breathing</li> <li>• Swelling is persistent and does not improve with home management</li> <li>• Unexpected weight gain</li> </ul> <p>Note: Your care team may ask you to contact them if your weight increases by a certain amount over a certain time period.</p>

<p>Liver Problems</p>	<p>Description: Treatment can cause liver injury. Your care team may check your liver with blood tests before and during treatment.</p> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yellowing of your skin or the white part of your eyes (jaundice)</li> <li>• Severe nausea or vomiting</li> <li>• Pain on the right side of your stomach area (abdomen)</li> <li>• Dark, tea-colored urine</li> <li>• Bleeding or bruising more easily than normal</li> </ul>
<p>Rash or Itchy Skin</p>	<p>Description: Rash or itchy skin can cause redness, swelling, and a variety of bumps or patches (small red spots, welts, blisters, or scaly dry areas).</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep your skin moisturized with creams or lotions to reduce rash and itchiness.</li> <li>• Wear loose-fitting clothing.</li> <li>• Avoid perfumes and colognes, as they may worsen rash symptoms.</li> <li>• Limit time spent in the heat to prevent worsening symptoms.</li> <li>• Avoid sun exposure, especially between 10 AM and 4 PM, to lower the risk of sunburn.</li> <li>• Wear long-sleeved clothing with ultraviolet (UV) protection and broad-brimmed hats.</li> <li>• Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen (UVA/UVB) with sun protective factor (SPF) 30 or higher as directed.</li> <li>• Use lip balm with SPF 30 or higher.</li> <li>• Avoid tanning beds.</li> <li>• Your care team may recommend medicines for symptoms.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rash or itching that continues to worsen</li> </ul>

Select Rare Side Effects

Side Effect	Talk to Your Care Team if You Have Any of These Signs or Symptoms
Lung Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cough</li> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Chest pain or tightness</li> </ul>
Capillary Leak Syndrome (CLS)	<p>CLS happens when fluid and proteins leak from your small blood vessels into surrounding tissues. It requires immediate treatment to prevent a drop in blood pressure and other serious complications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swelling or puffiness and are urinating less than usual</li> <li>• Trouble breathing</li> <li>• Swelling of your stomach area (abdomen) and feeling of fullness</li> <li>• Dizziness or feeling faint</li> <li>• A general feeling of tiredness</li> </ul>
Posterior Reversible Encephalopathy Syndrome (PRES)	<p>A neurologic condition called PRES can happen during treatment with gemcitabine.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe headache</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Weakness</li> <li>• Seizures</li> <li>• Blindness or change in vision</li> </ul>
Thrombotic Microangiopathy (TMA)	<p>TMA is a condition involving blood clots and injury to small blood vessels that may cause harm to your kidneys, brain, and other organs.</p> <p>Get medical help right away if you get any of the following signs or symptoms during treatment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Weakness</li> <li>• Swelling of arms and legs</li> <li>• Yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes (jaundice)</li> <li>• Stomach-area (abdominal) or back pain</li> <li>• Nausea or vomiting</li> <li>• Feeling sick</li> <li>• Decreased urination</li> </ul>

**Before starting treatment, ask your care team when to call 9-1-1 or seek emergency help. If you experience any new, worsening, or uncontrolled side effects, contact your care team immediately.**

### Intimacy, Pregnancy, and Breastfeeding

- Treatment may **change how you feel about intimacy and your body**. However, physical closeness—such as holding hands and hugging—remains safe. It is common to have questions about intimacy. If needed, talk to your care team for guidance.
- Treatment may **harm an unborn baby**.
  - If you are able to become pregnant:
    - Take a pregnancy test before starting treatment.
    - Use an effective method of birth control during treatment and for 6 months after your last dose of gemcitabine.
    - If you think you might be pregnant or if you become pregnant, tell your care team right away.
  - If your partner is able to become pregnant, use an effective method of birth control—such as condoms—during treatment and for 3 months after your last dose of gemcitabine.
- **Do NOT breastfeed** during treatment and for 1 week after your last dose of gemcitabine.

### Handling Body Fluids and Waste

Some drugs you receive may stay in your urine, stool, sweat, or vomit for many days after treatment. Because many cancer drugs are toxic, your body waste may also be dangerous to touch. To help protect yourself, your loved ones, and the environment, **follow these instructions** for at least **48 hours** after each dose of **gemcitabine**:

- People who are pregnant should avoid touching anything that may be soiled with body fluids from the patient.
- You can use your usual toilet. Always close the lid and flush to discard all waste. If you have a low-flow toilet, flush twice.
- If the toilet or seat is soiled with urine, stool, or vomit, clean the surface after each use before others use it.
- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after using the toilet.
- If you need a bedpan, inform your caregiver so they can wear gloves and assist with cleanup. Wash the bedpan with soap and water daily.
- If you cannot control your bladder or bowels, use a disposable pad with a plastic back, a diaper, or a sheet to absorb waste.
- Wash any skin exposed to body waste with soap and water.
- Wash soiled linens or clothing separately from other laundry. If you don't have a washer, place them in a plastic bag until they can be washed.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after touching soiled linens or clothing.

**Additional Information**

- **Tell your care team about all the medicines you take.**  
This includes prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and herbal products. Before starting any new medicine, supplement, or vaccine, ask your care team first.
- **Worsening side effects from radiation treatment.**  
Tell your care team if you have had or are planning to receive radiation therapy.
- **This Patient Education Sheet may not describe all possible side effects.**  
Call your care team for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

**Notes**

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Scan the QR code below to access this education sheet.



Important notice: The Association of Cancer Care Centers (ACCC), Hematology/Oncology Pharmacy Association (HOPA), Network for Collaborative Oncology Development & Advancement, Inc. (NCODA), and Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) have collaborated in gathering information for and developing this patient education guide. This guide represents a brief summary of the medication derived from information provided by the drug manufacturer and other resources.

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