

# Pembrolizumab and Paclitaxel

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

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

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

- This treatment is often used for:
  - Breast cancer
  - Ovarian, fallopian tube, or primary peritoneal cancer
- It may also be used for other reasons.
- Your care team may perform a test to make sure treatment is right for you.

**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
Pembrolizumab (pem-broh-LIH-zoo-mab): Keytruda (kee-TROO-duh)	Boosts your immune system to help it attack cancer cells more effectively.	Infusion into a vein (intravenous (IV) infusion).
Paclitaxel (PA-klih-TAK-sil): Taxol (TAK-saal)	Slows down or stops the growth of cancer cells by preventing cancer cells from properly dividing and creating new cells.	Infusion into a vein (intravenous (IV) infusion).

**Note:** Your care team may give you pembrolizumab and berahyaluronidase (Keytruda Qlex) instead of pembrolizumab. Pembrolizumab and berahyaluronidase is given as an injection under the skin (subcutaneous injection) into the stomach area (abdomen) or outer thigh over 1 to 2 minutes.

**Treatment Administration and Schedule:** Treatment is typically repeated every 3, 4, or 6 weeks. This length of time is called a “cycle”.

**Option #1: Every 3 Weeks**

- Pembrolizumab is given on Day 1.
- Paclitaxel is given on Days 1, 8, and 15.

Treatment Name	Cycle 1							Next Cycle
	Day 1	...	Day 8	...	Day 15	...	Day 21	Day 1
Pembrolizumab	✓							✓
Paclitaxel	✓		✓		✓			✓

## Treatment Administration and Schedule (Continued)

**Option #2: Every 6 Weeks**

- Pembrolizumab is given on Day 1.
- Paclitaxel is given on Days 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, and 36.

Treatment Name	Cycle 1													Next Cycle
	Day 1	...	Day 8	...	Day 15	...	Day 22	...	Day 29	...	Day 36	...	Day 42	Day 1
Pembrolizumab	✓													✓
Paclitaxel	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓			✓

**Option #3: Pembrolizumab Every 3 Weeks and Paclitaxel Weekly for 3 Weeks Followed by a Week Off**

- Pembrolizumab is given on Day 1 of a 21-day (3-week) cycle.
- Paclitaxel is given Days 1, 8, and 15 of every 28-day (4-week) cycle.

Treatment Name	Days																								Next Cycle		
	1	...	8	...	15	...	22	...	29	...	36	...	43	...	50	...	57	...	64	...	71	...	77	...	84	1	
Pembrolizumab	✓						✓						✓						✓								✓
Paclitaxel	✓		✓		✓			✓		✓		✓					✓		✓		✓					✓	

**Option #4: Pembrolizumab Every 6 Weeks and Paclitaxel Weekly for 3 Weeks Followed by a Week Off**

- Pembrolizumab is given on Day 1 of a 42-day (6-week) cycle.
- Paclitaxel is given Days 1, 8, and 15 of every 28-day (4-week) cycle.

Treatment Name	Days																								Next Cycle		
	1	...	8	...	15	...	22	...	29	...	36	...	43	...	50	...	57	...	64	...	71	...	77	...	84	1	
Pembrolizumab	✓												✓														✓
Paclitaxel	✓		✓		✓			✓		✓		✓					✓		✓		✓					✓	

### 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 infusion-related reactions	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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><b>Infusion-Related Reactions (Boxed Warning)</b></p>	<p>Description: An infusion reaction is a bad response that can happen during or shortly after receiving medicine through a vein. You can have infusion reactions with either pembrolizumab or paclitaxel, but they are more likely to happen with paclitaxel.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your care team may prescribe medicines before your infusion to help reduce your risk of infusion reactions or make any infusion reaction less severe.</li> <li>• You may be monitored for infusion reactions during each infusion.</li> <li>• Your care team may slow down or stop your infusion, or completely stop treatment if you have an infusion reaction.</li> </ul> <p>Get medical help right away if you develop any of the following during or after your infusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chills or shaking</li> <li>• Itching, rash, or flushing</li> <li>• Trouble breathing, wheezing, or tongue swelling</li> <li>• Dizziness or feeling faint</li> <li>• Feeling of impending doom</li> <li>• Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher</li> <li>• New or severe pain in your back or neck</li> </ul>
<p><b>Low White Blood Cell (WBC) Count (Neutropenia) and Increased Risk of Infection (Boxed Warning)</b></p>	<p>Description: WBCs help protect your body from infections. A low WBC count increases your risk of getting infections.</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><b>Low Red Blood Cell (RBC) Count and Hemoglobin (Hgb) (Anemia)</b></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>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>Mouth Sores or Irritation (Mucositis or Stomatitis)</p>	<p>Description: Treatment can irritate the lining of the mouth. In some cases, this can cause redness, sores, pain, and swelling.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rinse your mouth after meals and at bedtime; rinse more often if sores develop.</li> <li>• Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush or use a cotton swab after meals.</li> <li>• Use a mild, non-alcohol mouth rinse at least 4 times daily (after meals and at bedtime). Example: 1/8 teaspoon salt + 1/4 teaspoon baking soda in 8 oz warm water.</li> <li>• Avoid acidic, hot, spicy, rough, or crunchy foods and drinks that can irritate your mouth.</li> <li>• Avoid tobacco, alcohol, and alcohol-based mouthwash.</li> <li>• Your care team may prescribe medicines or mouth treatments to help with pain and healing.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Painful mouth sores or throat pain</li> <li>• Trouble eating or significant weight loss</li> </ul>

<p>Nausea and Vomiting</p>	<p>Description: Nausea is an uncomfortable feeling in your stomach or the need to throw up. You may or may not vomit.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat smaller, more frequent meals.</li> <li>• Avoid fatty, fried, spicy, or highly sweet foods.</li> <li>• Eat bland foods at room temperature and drink clear liquids.</li> <li>• If you vomit, start with small sips of water, broth, or other clear liquids. If these stay down, try soft foods (such as gelatin, plain cornstarch pudding, yogurt, strained soup, or strained cooked cereal) and gradually return to solid foods.</li> <li>• Your care team may prescribe medicine for these symptoms.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vomiting for more than 24 hours</li> <li>• Nonstop vomiting</li> <li>• Signs of dehydration (very thirsty, dry mouth, dizziness, or dark urine)</li> <li>• Blood or coffee-ground-like appearance in your vomit</li> <li>• Severe stomach pain that does not go away after vomiting</li> </ul>
<p>Diarrhea</p>	<p>Description: Diarrhea is loose, watery stools or more frequent bowel movements than usual. It can cause dehydration and weakness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep track of how often you go to the bathroom each day.</li> <li>• Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water or other fluids daily, unless your care team tells you otherwise.</li> <li>• Eat small meals of mild, low-fiber foods (such as bananas, applesauce, potatoes, chicken, rice, and toast).</li> <li>• If you have diarrhea, avoid high-fiber foods (such as raw vegetables, fruits, and whole grains), gas-producing foods (such as broccoli and beans), dairy (such as milk and yogurt), and spicy, fried, or greasy foods.</li> <li>• Your care team may recommend an antidiarrheal medicine such as loperamide (Imodium).</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 or more bowel movements than normal in 24 hours</li> <li>• Dizziness or lightheadedness while having diarrhea</li> <li>• Signs of dehydration (very thirsty, dry mouth, dizziness, or dark urine)</li> <li>• Bloody diarrhea</li> </ul>

<p>Numbness, Tingling, or Burning in Your Hands or Feet (Peripheral Neuropathy)</p>	<p>Description: Nerve pain and tingling are uncomfortable sensations from nerve damage or irritation. Pain may be sharp, burning, or deep. Tingling can feel like pins-and-needles or mild electric shocks, often in the hands, feet, arms, or legs.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep a daily log of pain and sensations, noting triggers and what helps or makes it worse.</li> <li>• Check your feet every day for cuts, sores, blisters, or color changes, especially if numbness reduces feeling.</li> <li>• Wear comfortable, well-fitting shoes and avoid walking barefoot if sensation is reduced.</li> <li>• Protect hands and feet from extreme heat or cold.</li> <li>• Your care team may recommend or prescribe medicines, topical treatments, physical therapy, or supplements to help with symptoms.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or worsening “pins and needles”, burning, or numbness in your hands or feet</li> <li>• Trouble moving your arms or legs, or weakness</li> <li>• Problems with balance or frequent falls</li> </ul>
<p>Muscle, Joint, or Bone Pain</p>	<p>Description: Muscle pain is soreness, aching, cramps, stiffness, tenderness, or weakness in one or more muscles. Joint pain is pain, stiffness, swelling, or reduced movement where two bones meet.</p> <p>Recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep a pain diary: note pain levels, locations, and activities that make it better or worse.</li> <li>• Do gentle exercise (walking, stretching, yoga) to maintain mobility and strength. Check with your care team before starting a new activity.</li> <li>• Use a warm compress for stiff muscles or a cold pack to reduce swelling and numb pain—use what helps the area.</li> <li>• Your care team may recommend or prescribe medicines, including over-the-counter pain relievers.</li> </ul> <p>Talk to your care team if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pain you cannot control with usual measures</li> <li>• Swelling, redness, or warmth in a joint</li> <li>• New weakness</li> <li>• Trouble walking or moving</li> <li>• </li> </ul>

## Hair Loss (Alopecia)

Description: Hair loss or thinning may begin days to weeks after treatment starts and usually grows back later. New growth can be a different color or texture and may not look the same as before.

### Recommendations:

- Consider a short haircut before treatment and use scarves, hats, or wigs for comfort and confidence.
- Keep your head covered outdoors to protect it from the sun and cold; use sunscreen on your uncovered scalp.
- Use gentle haircare: mild shampoo, soft brush, and avoid heat styling and harsh treatments.
- Ask your care team about wig prescriptions or resources for head coverings.

### Talk to your care team if you have:

- No hair regrowth months after treatment ends
- Concern about hair changes or need help finding a wig or support resources

## 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> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chest pain</li> </ul>
Liver Problems	<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> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>
Hormone Gland Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headaches that will not go away, or unusual headaches</li> <li>Eye sensitivity to light</li> <li>Eye problems</li> <li>Rapid heartbeat</li> <li>Increased sweating</li> <li>Extreme tiredness</li> <li>Weight gain or weight loss</li> <li>Feeling more hungry or thirsty than usual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urinating more often than usual</li> <li>Hair loss</li> <li>Feeling cold</li> <li>Constipation</li> <li>Your voice gets deeper</li> <li>Dizziness or fainting</li> <li>Changes in mood or behavior, such as decreased sex drive, irritability, or forgetfulness</li> </ul>
Skin Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rash</li> <li>Itching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skin blistering or peeling</li> <li>Painful sores or ulcers in the mouth or nose, throat, or genital area</li> </ul>
Kidney Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in your amount of urine</li> <li>Blood in your urine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Swelling of your ankles</li> <li>Loss of appetite</li> </ul>
Problems in Other Organs and Tissues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chest pain, irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, swelling of ankles</li> <li>Confusion, sleepiness, memory problems, changes in mood or behavior, stiff neck, balance problems, tingling or numbness of the arms or legs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Double vision, blurry vision, sensitivity to light, eye pain, changes in eyesight</li> </ul>
Extravasation	<p>Extravasation happens when medicine that is supposed to go into a vein leaks out into the tissues around it. This can cause pain, swelling, and damage to the skin and tissues. Extravasation can happen with paclitaxel.</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pain, burning, or stinging at the infusion site</li> <li>Swelling, redness, or blistering around the site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coolness or numbness in the area</li> <li>Decreased blood flow or tissue damage, potentially leading to ulcers or tissue death in severe cases</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, Fertility, 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 can affect your **ability to have children**. It may damage your reproductive organs or stop them from working. If you are worried about fertility, talk to your care team before starting treatment.
- 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 with pembrolizumab and paclitaxel and for 4 months after your last dose of pembrolizumab.
  - 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.
- **Do NOT breastfeed** during treatment, for 6 to 10 days after each dose of paclitaxel, and for 4 months after your last dose of pembrolizumab.

## 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 **4 days** after each dose of **paclitaxel**: (Note: Pembrolizumab does not require special handling of body fluids and waste.)

- 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.
- **Tell your care team about all your health problems.**  
This includes issues with your immune system, like Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, or lupus. Also, tell them if you have had an organ transplant, like a kidney or eye transplant. Let them know if you had a stem cell transplant from a donor, had radiation to your chest, or have a nerve problem like myasthenia gravis or Guillain-Barré syndrome.
- **Your treatment may cause side effects that need medicine or a break from treatment.**  
Your care team may give you corticosteroids or hormone medicines to help. Sometimes, they may need to delay or stop your treatment if you have certain side effects.
- **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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