



KEEP ALL MEDICINE OUT OF THE SIGHT AND REACH OF CHILDREN

FC

What is FC?

FC is the name of a combination of chemotherapy drugs used to treat chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL). It is made up of the drugs

- Fludarabine (Fludara)
- Cyclophosphamide

How you have FC

- You usually have FC chemotherapy as cycles of treatment. Each cycle of treatment lasts 4 weeks. Depending on your needs, you may have up to 8 cycles, taking 6 to 8 months in total.
- You can either have your treatment
- As tablets – you take _____ tablet/s of fludarabine and _____ of cyclophosphamide once a day
- As a drip (infusion) into a vein or as slow injections through a small tube (cannula) put into a vein
- You have treatment for 3 to 5 days. Then for the rest of that week and for the following 3 weeks you have no treatment. Your next cycle of treatment then starts 4 weeks after the beginning of the first treatment.
- If you are taking tablets it is important that you store them in a safe place away from children. It is very important that you take them according to the instructions your doctor or pharmacist gives you. For example, whether you have a full or empty stomach can affect how much of a drug gets into your bloodstream. You should take the right dose, not more or less. And never stop taking a cancer drug without talking to your specialist first.
- The side effects of a combination of drugs are usually a mixture of those of each drug. The combination may increase or decrease your chance of getting each side effect or it may change the severity.
- It is important to take Cyclophosphamide tablets on half an hour to an hour before breakfast, and to take enough fluids while taking tablets. Because they can affect the bladder.

Common side effects

More than 10 in every 100 people have one or more of the side effects listed below.

- A temporary drop in the number of blood cells made by the bone marrow, causing
- An increased risk of getting an infection from a drop in white blood cells – it is harder to fight infections and you can become very ill. You may have headaches, aching muscles, a cough, sore throat, pain passing urine or feel cold and shivery
- Tiredness and breathlessness due to a drop in red blood cells (anaemia) – you may need a blood transfusion
- Bruising more easily due to a drop in platelets – you may have nosebleeds, bleeding gums after brushing your teeth, or lots of tiny red spots or bruises on your arms or legs (known as petechia)



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- Some of these side effects can be life threatening, particularly infections. You should contact your doctor straight away if you have any of these effects. Your doctor will check your blood counts regularly to see how well your bone marrow is working.
- **Contact your treatment center straight away if you have any of these effects or if your temperature goes above 38°C**
- Feeling or being sick in about 3 out of every 10 people (30%) but this is usually well controlled with anti sickness medicines
- Hair loss – most people have complete hair loss but the hair grows back once the treatment ends
- Tiredness during and after treatment affects just under half (50%) the people who have FC – most people find their energy levels are back to normal within 6 months to a year
- Diarrhoea in 3 out of 10 people (30%) – drink plenty of fluids and tell your doctor or nurse if diarrhoea becomes severe or continues for more than 3 days
- Constipation in 3 out of 10 people (30%) – your doctor or nurse may give you laxatives to help prevent this but do tell them if you are constipated for more than 3 days
- A raised temperature in up to 4 out of 10 people (40%)
- Loss of taste or taste changes
- Fludarabine may cause changes in your immune system that permanently affect the production of blood cells – these include autoimmune haemolytic anaemia, thrombocytopenia and thrombocytopenic purpura
- Women may stop having periods (amenorrhoea) but this may be temporary
- Loss of fertility – you may not be able to get pregnant or father a child after treatment with these drugs. It is important to talk to your doctor before starting treatment if you are considering having a child in the future

Occasional side effects

Between 1 and 10 in every 100 people have one or more of these.

- Cystitis (inflammation of the bladder) can cause pain and occasionally blood when passing urine. Contact your doctor or nurse straight away if you see blood in your urine. You should drink 8 to 12 cups of fluid a day while you are having treatment and for 3 days afterwards
- Your nails may darken or become ridged
- Your skin may darken
- Mouth sores and ulcers

Rare side effects

Fewer than 1 in 100 people have these.

- Nerve changes causing numbness and tingling in fingers and toes
- There is a small risk that you may get a second cancer some years after cyclophosphamide treatment
- Damage to heart muscle which is usually temporary but for a small number of people may be permanent – your doctor will check your heart before and after your treatment
- Changes in lung tissue may lead to a cough or breathlessness
- Fluid build up, leading to swelling of the hands or feet



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Important points to remember

You may have a few of these effects. A side effect may get worse through your course of treatment. Or you may have more side effects as the course goes on. This depends on

- How many times you've had a drug before
- Your general health
- How much of the drug you have (the dose)
- The way you take the drug (tablets or drip)
- Other drugs you are having

Coping with side effects

Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about all your side effects so that they can help you manage them. They can give you advice or reassure you. Your nurse will give you a contact number to ring if you have any questions or problems. If in doubt, call them.

Other medicines

Tell your doctor about any other medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbal supplements, and over the counter remedies – some drugs can react together.

Pregnancy and contraception

These drugs may have a harmful effect on a developing baby and it is not advisable to become pregnant or father a child if you are having this treatment. Talk about contraception with your doctor or nurse before treatment starts.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is not advisable during this treatment because the drug may come through in the breast milk.

Medical and dental treatment

If you need to go into hospital for any reason other than cancer, always tell the doctors and nurses that you are having chemotherapy. Give them contact details for your cancer doctor.

Talk to your cancer doctor or nurse if you think you need dental treatment. Always tell your dentist you are having chemotherapy.

Immunisations and chemotherapy

- You should not have immunisations with live vaccines while you are having chemotherapy or for at least 6 months afterwards. In these include rubella, mumps, measles (usually given together as MMR), BCG, yellow fever and Zostavax (shingles vaccine).
- You can have other vaccines, but they may not give you as much protection as usual until your immune system has fully recovered from your chemotherapy. It is safe to have the flu vaccine.
- It is safe for you to be in contact with other people who've had live vaccines as injections. There can be problems with vaccines you take by mouth (oral vaccines), but not many people have these now. So there is usually no problem in being with any baby or child who has recently had any vaccination. You might need to make sure that you aren't in contact



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with anyone who has had oral polio, cholera or typhoid vaccination recently, particularly if you live abroad.