

CYCLOPHOSPHAMIDE TREATMENT LEAFLET

TREATMENT WITH CYCLOPHOSPHAMIDE

Cyclophosphamide is known as a cytotoxic drug. This means it is poisonous to various cells in the body and interferes with cell growth. For this reason it was found to be very useful as a chemotherapy drug to stop the growth of cancerous tumours.

Cyclophosphamide has also been found very effective in reducing the activity of the immune system. When used in this way it is sometimes referred to as an immunosuppressant. It is particularly useful in conditions in which the immune system attacks the body's own tissues ('auto-immune disease'). This includes a number of types of vasculitis. The dose of cyclophosphamide used to treat vasculitis is generally lower than that used for cancer.

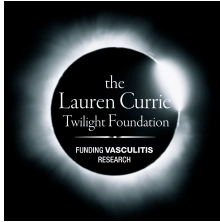
Cyclophosphamide has a long list of side effects and the risks of using it have to be weighed against the benefits. It can however be a life-saving medicine in some circumstances. For example, the outlook for people with granulomatosis with polyangiitis was much poorer before cyclophosphamide replaced steroids as the main treatment option.

Other types of vasculitis which respond to cyclophosphamide include polyarteritis nodosa, microscopic polyangiitis, eosinophilic granulomatosis with polyangiitis, cryoglobulinemia, central nervous system vasculitis, and rheumatoid vasculitis.

Cyclophosphamide may be given in a tablet that you take every day or by a drip into a vein ('intravenous infusion'). Intravenous cyclophosphamide is sometimes given slowly at a low dose and sometimes in a single dose over a period of about 30 minutes every 2-4 weeks ('pulsed'). Most people need treatment for 3-9 months, and sometimes longer.

The side effects associated with cyclophosphamide include:

- Nausea and vomiting – these can usually be controlled with anti-sickness medicine. Mouth ulcers and loss of appetite may be other digestive system complications.
- Hair loss – this is usually temporary. The hair tends to grow back once the treatment is stopped.
- Infections – uncommon infections can occur such as herpes zoster ('shingles'). Serious infections can result due to low blood counts and so regular blood tests are required and you should tell your doctor immediately if you get a sore throat, temperature or other signs of infection.
- Skin rash – this is usually just a discolouration or flushing of the skin but very rarely you can get reddish spots or circular patches with blisters. These can be potentially serious reactions so you should seek medical advice if they occur. Serious skin rashes usually occur within the first few weeks of treatment.
- Infertility - cyclophosphamide can cause disappearance of menstrual periods in women and dramatically reduce the sperm count in men. In most cases these effects are reversed when treatment is stopped.



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- Cancers - bladder cancer and leukaemia are the two main cancers that can occur, although this complication is infrequent. Even more uncommonly, other types of cancer can develop.

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Additional Support & Guidance

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