

Managing Diarrhoea during treatment with Irinotecan

Diarrhoea can be any of the following symptoms:

- Several extra bowel movements each day – more often (4 or more), looser and more of it than is normal for you.
- Bowel motions are very watery or much more watery stoma contents than normal or emptying your stoma bag more often.
- Bad cramps in your tummy.
- You pass watery bowel motions in the middle of the night.
- You need to really rush to the toilet to prevent incontinence or cannot make it in time.

If you also have any of the following symptoms then you **MUST** phone for advice:

- High temperature of 37.5°C or above.
- You are also being sick or feeling so sick you are not able to drink much.

Before you leave the hospital you will be given anti-diarrhoea tablets (called Loperamide) and antibiotics (called Ciprofloxacin) to take home. These are **only** to be used if you develop diarrhoea.

What do I do if I get early diarrhoea (within the first 24 hours after your irinotecan drip)?

Many people experience sweating, increased saliva, watery eyes or tummy cramps while the drip is running. We give you an injection (atropine) before your chemotherapy to control these. However, if you have more of these side effects in the first 24 hours, phone the hospital for advice. You may need another atropine injection.

What do I do if I get diarrhoea after the first 24 hours?

Delayed diarrhoea (more than 24 hours after chemotherapy) usually occurs within 1-2 weeks after Irinotecan. This can be dangerous if it is not treated, but it usually responds well to prompt treatment:

As soon as you have any diarrhoea, start taking your Loperamide:

- TWO Loperamide tablets (4mg) immediately after the first liquid stool, then ONE tablet (2mg) every 2 hours. Overnight you may take 2 tablets (4mg) every 4 hours. Do not take any more than 8 tablets in 24 hours. **Continue until the diarrhoea has stopped for 12 hours.**
- **Do not take this dose of Loperamide for more than 48 hours** without being seen by a doctor.
- Drink plenty of fluids; 2-3 litres of water or other fluids (e.g. soup or fizzy drinks) daily. You can use Dioralyte sachets according to the instructions on the packet. If you are unable to drink or take the medicine (e.g. due to sickness), contact the Cancer Treatment Helpline.
- If the diarrhoea has **not settled after 24 hours**, contact the Cancer Treatment Helpline. You may be asked to start taking your **Ciprofloxacin** (ONE tablet (250mg) twice a day for a total of 7 days). However if the diarrhoea is severe or if you cannot drink enough, are also vomiting or have a temperature, you may also need to be seen at the hospital.
- If the diarrhoea **goes on for a further 24 hours** you should contact the hospital again, as it is likely that you will need to be seen at the hospital.
- Make sure you get a new supply of Loperamide and Ciprofloxacin when you visit for your next chemotherapy and let the team know what has happened.

What do I do if I get other side effects?

If you become suddenly unwell between hospital visits, especially if you have a high temperature, shivering fits or severe diarrhoea, please contact the Cancer Treatment Helpline.

Please follow the advice you have been given about who to phone on the numbers below:

24 hour chemotherapy line:

Cancer Treatment Helpline: **0800 917 7711**

Monday – Friday 9am to 4pm:

Edinburgh:	Cancer Treatment Helpline	0800 917 7711
Dumfries:	Leanne Porteous	01387 241 380 or Helen Johnstone 01387 241194
Borders:	Oncology nurses	01896 826000 , bleep 3041 or 826833
W.Loathian:	St John's chemo unit	01506 522119
Fife	Ward 34 unit, Kirkcaldy	01592 729343