MEDICINE INFORMATION

# Docetaxel and cisplatin

What patients and caregivers can expect from docetaxel and cisplatin, including hydration, hearing checks and nerve symptoms.

## At a glance

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| **Treatment** | Docetaxel + Cisplatin |
| **When it may be used** | The two-drug combination has been used for selected people with non-small-cell lung cancer. |
| **How it is given** | Docetaxel and cisplatin are both given by drip into a vein. |
| **Before you start** | Tell the team about kidney or heart problems, changes in hearing, tingling or numbness and diabetes. |

## What this treatment is and how it works

Docetaxel interferes with cell division. Cisplatin damages DNA, the instructions cells use to grow. Together the medicines can affect cancer cells as well as some healthy cells.

## When it may be used

Your type and stage of lung cancer, previous treatment, kidney function and overall health help determine whether it fits your plan.

## Before treatment

Ask whether a hearing test is needed and check the instructions for steroid tablets before docetaxel.

## How treatment is given

Both medicines are given through a drip. Extra fluids and anti-sickness medicines are part of cisplatin care. Ask what to take after the visit, how to manage fluids at home and how long to allow for the visit.

## Tests and monitoring during treatment

The team checks blood counts, kidney and liver function and salts such as magnesium. Report less urine than usual, vomiting, new ringing in your ears or changes in hearing. Tell the team if numbness makes walking or using your hands harder.

# Side effects

### Common or more frequent side effects

- **Changes in blood counts.** Treatment can lower the white cells that fight infection, the red cells that carry oxygen and the platelets that stop bleeding. You may feel tired or get breathless sooner than usual. Let the unit know about nosebleeds, new bruises or small red or purple spots. Fever or shaking chills needs a call to the urgent number even if your next blood test is already booked.
- **Nail changes and hair loss.** Nails may discolour, become tender or loosen. Keep them clean and tell the team about pain, swelling or discharge, especially if your blood counts are low. Hair loss can start during treatment. Ask early about scalp cooling where appropriate, because it needs to be arranged before chemotherapy.
- **Nausea and vomiting after cisplatin.** Cisplatin can cause nausea on the treatment day and on later days. Keep the prescribed anti-sickness timetable after going home. Ask which medicine to use if nausea breaks through. Contact the unit if you cannot drink or take essential medicines. The team may need to check hydration and kidney function.
- **Tingling, altered feeling or pain in hands and feet.** Give examples of what has changed, such as difficulty with buttons, holding a cup or getting your balance on steps. Tell the team if the sensation lasts until the next visit. If temperature is hard to judge with your fingers or toes, take care around hot water and heating pads.

### Other reported side effects

Docetaxel can cause fluid retention. Cisplatin can affect hearing and the kidneys. Tell the team about hearing changes even if they seem mild.

### Serious effects to recognise

- **Hearing or balance changes.** Platinum chemotherapy can cause ringing in the ears or hearing loss. Ask if you need a baseline or follow-up hearing test. Report new ringing, poorer hearing or changes that make it hard to follow conversations. Your team can check how this affects the next treatment.

Drip reactions, serious infection and dehydration need prompt assessment. Tell the nurse immediately about wheezing, dizziness, rash or pain at the drip site.

# When to seek urgent help

Call your hospital’s 24-hour cancer care number straight away for fever, chills, reduced urine, ongoing vomiting, unusual bleeding or new breathlessness. Follow your hospital’s written temperature instructions. If you have no written threshold, call at 37.5°C (99.5°F) or above, or below 36°C (96.8°F). Call if you feel very unwell even when your temperature is normal.

Seek emergency care for severe breathing difficulty, swelling of the face or throat, chest pain, collapse or bleeding that will not stop.

## Practical advice for this treatment

### Allow time for fluids and blood tests

Cisplatin treatment includes fluids and blood tests to protect and monitor the kidneys. The visit may last longer than the chemotherapy infusion. Ask whether extra fluids or a repeat blood test are planned afterwards. Report repeated vomiting, poor drinking or a clear fall in urine output.

### Keep track of hearing and nerve symptoms

Cisplatin can cause ringing in the ears or hearing loss. Tell your team if you struggle to hear speech, need to turn the volume up or develop new ringing. Note tingling or numbness that interferes with writing, using buttons or walking safely. Both medicines can affect nerves.

### Prepare for the first dose of steroid

Check exactly when to take any prescribed docetaxel premedication. Tell the team if you missed it or vomited soon after taking it. Ask the pharmacist what to do if you take anti-inflammatory painkillers or other medicines that can affect the kidneys.

## Medicines, interactions and vaccinations

Ask before using non-prescription anti-inflammatory painkillers or supplements. Tell the team about medicines that may affect hearing or kidney function. Check before vaccinations.

## Everyday life

Keep the treatment unit’s hydration and anti-sickness instructions with you. If you have a fluid restriction for a heart or kidney condition, ask for a plan that fits both treatments.

## Pregnancy, fertility and breastfeeding

Discuss contraception, breastfeeding and fertility preservation before the first cycle. Ask when precautions end after the last dose.

## After treatment

Ask how the team will check whether the cancer has responded. Report hearing or nerve changes that persist and ask if repeat testing or rehabilitation could help.

## Frequently asked questions

### Why do I need extra fluids?

Fluids help protect the kidneys when you receive cisplatin. Ask how much fluid is right for you at home.

### Is cisplatin the same as carboplatin?

They are different platinum medicines, with different checks and side effects.

### What if I hear ringing in my ears?

Contact the team when you notice ringing, reduced hearing or a change in balance. Cisplatin can affect hearing. The team may arrange a hearing test and review the treatment plan before another dose.

### What if I miss the steroid?

Tell the unit before your visit so the team can decide what to do.

### Can I take my usual anti-sickness tablets?

Follow the written plan and ask if you are unsure about combining tablets.

### Why is magnesium checked?

Cisplatin can lower magnesium. The team may replace it if needed.

### What if I cannot drink after treatment?

Call promptly if vomiting continues, you cannot keep fluids down or you pass much less urine.

### How are nerve symptoms assessed?

Tell the team what you can no longer do easily, such as fastening buttons or walking steadily.

## Individual medicine guides

- Docetaxel
- Cisplatin

### Sources and further reading

Read this guide alongside your hospital's plan. Ask your pharmacist to confirm the exact product dispensed in India and follow the instructions for that product.

### Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC) and prescribing information

- Docetaxel (Taxotere) - EU product page with SmPC
- Cisplatin injection - UK SmPC

### Additional sources

- Macmillan patient guide to docetaxel

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