

Side Effects**What You Should Do****Prevention****More Common:**

- Signs of infection/ fever, chills, cough
- Low white blood cells

- Keep a thermometer at home. Recognize the signs of infection.
- If your temperature is over 38°C or 100°F, go directly to the local Emergency Department. You may have an infection and need antibiotics.

- Limit contact with people who are sick or have colds. Rest often. Wash your hands often.

- Easy bruising or bleeding
- Black, tar-like bowel movements, rRed spots on skin
- Low platelet count
- May occur after you go home from the hospital

- If bleeding or bruising is unusual or will not stop, contact your doctor or nurse immediately or go directly to the local Emergency Department.
- Do not take ASA (Aspirin®); use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) instead.

- Use sharp objects with care. Use a soft toothbrush. Be careful when shaving. Tell your doctor before any dental work is done.

- Sores in the mouth or the lips ; may be severe

- Contact your doctor or nurse as soon as you notice sores on mouth or lips.

- Maintain good mouth hygiene. Use a soft toothbrush. Avoid hot, spicy or acidic foods.

- Slurred speech, uncontrolled movements of the eyes and face
- Confusion, sleepiness

- Tell your doctor or nurse at the hospital if you notice speech or movement difficulties, or other unusual symptoms.

- Your nurse and doctor will check you regularly during your hospital stay. You will be sent home from hospital once the risk of this side effect is past.

Less Common:

- Nausea and vomiting ; may be severe

- If vomiting is severe, contact your doctor or nurse right away.
- If you vomit within one hour of taking antiemetic tablets, you may take another dose of the antiemetic tablets. A suppository may be ordered if you cannot keep the tablets down.

- Your doctor can order medicine for nausea and vomiting. Continue drinking clear fluids. Get fresh air and rest.

- Red or painful eyes
- Sensitivity to light
- Increased tears in eyes
- Changes in eyesight

- Contact your doctor or nurse as soon as possible.

- Take prescribed eyedrops to prevent eye toxicity.

- Fast/irregular heartbeats; shortness of breath, trouble breathing; swelling of feet

- Go directly to the local Emergency Department.

- Your doctor will check your breathing. This side effect may take 3 to 4 weeks to appear.

Rare:

- Hair loss (from head and body)

- A wig, hat, cap, scarf or hair piece may be worn.
- Your hair will regrow, once all of your treatments are over.

- Chest pain, shortness of breath, irregular heart beat

- Go directly to the local Emergency Department.

- Yellow skin or eyes
- Unusual thirst

- Contact your doctor or nurse at your next appointment, or sooner if these symptoms bother you.

Precautions:

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist before using any other medicine (such as digoxin, flucytosine, ciprofloxacin, or norfloxacin), including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, minerals, and herbal products.
- If a doctor has advised you to take ASA (Aspirin®) to prevent heart disease or stroke, tell your cancer doctor about this before you start cancer treatment. Otherwise, DO NOT take ASA for daily aches and pains during chemotherapy treatment; use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) products instead. (Check with your doctor or pharmacist if a product contains ASA or acetaminophen.)
- Cytarabine is a chemotherapy drug. Be careful that your family avoids any exposure to the drug from cleaning up if you vomit or have an incontinent accident. Your nurse will give you instructions on how to protect others in your home in case of exposure to the drug through your bodily fluids.
- It is important to tell your doctor if you have chickenpox (or have recently been exposed to someone who has had chickenpox), shingles, gout, kidney stones, kidney disease or liver disease.
- You should drink at least 2 to 3 L per day unless otherwise instructed by your doctor
- Your doctor may give you another medication to reduce the uric acid in your blood.
- Tell all other doctors or dentists at each visit that you are taking cytarabine, before you receive surgery (including dental work), vaccinations or treatment from them.
- You and your partner should avoid a pregnancy while taking cytarabine. Birth control pills alone may not be effective for contraception. It is important to discuss the most effective birth control with your doctor.
- Cytarabine should not be used if you are pregnant or breast feeding.
- Cytarabine may cause permanent changes in your ability to have children in the future. Ask your doctor or nurse for more information.

This information sheet does not contain all known information about this drug

For more information on this medication, please call your doctor, pharmacist or nurse

(Phone Number for your Doctor or Nurse)

Or call the Canadian Cancer Society's
Cancer Information Service at

1-888-939-3333

or at

www.cancer.ca

Collaborative Project of:
Systemic Therapy Program, Cancer Care Nova Scotia
New Brunswick Cancer Network, Division of New Brunswick Dept.
of Health

Approved by the Nova Scotia Cancer Patient Education Committee
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(1-866-599-2236)

CNB 7645

MEDICATION INFO SHEET

High Dose CYTARABINE (sigh- TAR-a-been)

Other names for this medication:

Cytosar® (Brand Name) Other generic products available

Appearance:

Injection: Clear solution for injection into the bloodstream.

Why this medication is used:

Cytarabine is used to treat leukemia and lymphomas.

How do you take this medication:

Your nurse will inject the drug into your vein over several hours. This will be given in the hospital.

You will need to drink plenty of fluids (8 to 12 cups per day) while on this medication (or you may be given fluids by intravenous infusion).

