

**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.

- Bruising or bleeding
- Black, tar-like bowel movements
- Red spots on skin
- Low platelet count

- 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

- 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.

**Less Common:**

- Nausea and vomiting

- 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.

- Joint pain
- Swelling of lower limbs
- Red or painful eyes
- Changes in eyesight

- Contact your doctor or nurse as soon as possible.

**Rare:**

- Hair loss (from head and body)
- Chest pain, shortness of breath, irregular heart beat
- Yellow skin or eyes
- Unusual thirst

- A wig, hat, cap, scarf or hair piece may be worn.
- Go directly to the local Emergency Department.
- Contact your doctor or nurse at your next appointment, or sooner if these symptoms bother you.

- Your hair will regrow, once all of your treatments are over.

## 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
- 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
- Your doctor may advise you to drink extra fluids and to take medication to reduce the uric acid in your blood.
- 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.)
- Tell all other doctors or dentists at each visit that you are taking cytarabine, before you receive surgery (including dental work), vaccinations or treatment.
- This drug alone, or in combination with other chemotherapy drugs, may cause fatigue, reduced sex drive, reduced sexual satisfaction and changes to any intimate relationships for both men and women.
- 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.
- 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.

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:

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Approved by the Nova Scotia Cancer Patient Education Committee  
Visit our Web site at: [www.cancercare.ns.ca](http://www.cancercare.ns.ca)

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(1-866-599-2236)

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## MEDICATION INFO SHEET

# 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 or under the skin.

### Why this medication is used:

Cytarabine is used to treat leukemia and lymphomas.

### How do you take this medication:

Cytarabine may be given in low doses, or very high doses. In some cases, cytarabine may be given in low doses by self-injection under the skin.

Injection: Cytarabine is injected into the bloodstream or under the skin by your chemotherapy nurse. It may also be given over several days by a pump, at home or in hospital.

If you are given cytarabine for injection under the skin, your nurse may teach you how to do these injections yourself.

If this medication is given in the home, ask the chemotherapy nurse for instructions on how to safely handle the used needles, syringes and other equipment used to give the drug. Waste products may be dangerous to you and your family if there is accidental exposure.

