



Provincial Health Services Authority

## For the Patient: GIAAVCT

Other Names: First-Line palliative combination chemotherapy for metastatic anal cancer using Carboplatin and Paclitaxel

**GI** = Gastrointestinal  
**A** = Anal  
**AV** = Advanced  
**C** = Carboplatin  
**T** = Paclitaxel (TAXOL®)

### ABOUT THIS MEDICATION

#### **What are these drugs used for?**

Carboplatin and Paclitaxel are intravenous drug treatments used to treat some types of cancers including ovarian cancer. They are often given in addition to the surgery done to remove all visible cancer.

#### **How do these drugs work?**

Carboplatin and Paclitaxel work by interfering with the genetic material of replicating cells and preventing an increase in the number of cancer cells.

### INTENDED BENEFITS

- This therapy is being given to destroy and/or limit the growth of cancer cells in your body. It may reduce the chance of your anal cancer coming back, or delay the time until the cancer relapses significantly. Research has shown that patients are likely to live longer after receiving chemotherapy treatment.

### TREATMENT SUMMARY

#### **How are these drugs given?**

- Your treatment plan consists of up to six chemotherapy “cycles”. Each cycle lasts 4 weeks (28 days).
- Paclitaxel and carboplatin are given directly into the vein (IV).
- You will receive paclitaxel once a week for three weeks (Days 1, 8 and 15) and carboplatin on the first week (Days 1). They will be given to you at the clinic by the chemotherapy nurse. A one week rest period follows the three weeks of chemotherapy
- This 4 week cycle or 28 day period of time is called a “cycle”. The cycles are repeated upto 6 as long as you are benefiting from chemotherapy, and not having too many side effects, as determined by your oncologist.
- Treatments will last about **three hours** on days with paclitaxel and carboplatin (Days 1). Treatments will last about **two hours** on days with paclitaxel only (Day 8 and 15). Your first treatment will probably take longer, as the nurse will review information on the chemotherapy drugs with you.

The calendar below shows how the medications are given each 4 week cycle.

C Y C L E	DATE	TREATMENT PLAN
		▶ Day 1 → paclitaxel IV x 1 day → carboplatin IV x 1 day
		▶ Day 8 → paclitaxel IV x 1 day
		▶ Day 15 → paclitaxel IV x 1 day
		▶ Day 22 → no treatment

**Treatment is continued for up to 6 cycles as long as you are benefiting from treatment and not having too many side effects, as determined by your oncologist.**

#### What will happen when I get my drugs?

- A blood test is done each cycle, on or about the day before each treatment day. The dose and timing of your treatment may be changed based on your blood counts and/or other side effects.
- You will be given a prescription for anti-nausea medications (to be filled at your regular community pharmacy). Please bring your anti-nausea medications with you to each treatment. Your nurse will tell you when to take the anti-nausea medication.
- You will also need to take your anti-nausea drugs at home after therapy. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it once it has occurred, so follow directions closely.
- You will be given medication to help prevent an allergic reaction to paclitaxel. This is usually given by the chemotherapy nurse, just before your treatment. The medications are given directly into the vein (IV).

## SIDE EFFECTS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM

Unexpected and unlikely side effects can occur with any drug treatment. The ones listed below are particularly important for you to be aware of as they are directly related to the common actions of the drugs in your treatment plan.

Your doctor will review the risks of treatment and possible side effects with you before starting treatment. The chemotherapy nurse will review possible side effects of paclitaxel and carboplatin and how to manage those side effects with you on the day you receive your first treatment.

SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS DURING TREATMENT	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Allergic reactions</b> commonly occur with paclitaxel. Signs of an allergic reaction may include flushing, rash, dizziness, breathing problems, abdominal or back pain. This can occur immediately or several hours after receiving paclitaxel and usually only with the first or second dose.</p>	<p>Tell your nurse if this happens while you are receiving paclitaxel or contact your oncologist <b>immediately</b> if this happens after you leave the clinic.</p>
<p>Paclitaxel <b>burns</b> if it leaks under the skin.</p>	<p>Tell your nurse or doctor <b>immediately</b> if you feel burning, stinging, or any other change while the drug is being given.</p>
<p><b>Nausea and vomiting</b> may occur after your treatment and may last for 24 hours.</p>	<p>You may be given a prescription for anti-nausea drug(s) to take before your chemotherapy treatment and/or at home. <b>It is easier to prevent nausea than treat it once it has occurred</b>, so follow directions closely.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts</li> <li>• Try the ideas in <i>Practical Tips to Manage Nausea*</i></li> </ul>
<p>Your <b>white blood cells</b> may decrease after your treatment. They usually return to normal after your last treatment. White blood cells protect your body by fighting bacteria (germs) that cause infection. When they are low, <b>you are at greater risk of having an infection.</b></p>	<p>To help prevent infection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wash your hands often and always after using the bathroom.</li> <li>• Take care of your skin and mouth.</li> <li>• Avoid crowds and people who are sick.</li> <li>• Call your doctor <b>immediately</b> at the first sign of an infection such as fever (over 100° F or 38° C by an oral thermometer), chills, cough, or burning when you pass urine.</li> </ul>

SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS DURING TREATMENT	MANAGEMENT
<p>Your platelets may decrease after your treatment. They usually return to normal before your next treatment. Platelets help to make your blood clot when you hurt yourself. <b>You may bruise or bleed more easily than usual.</b></p>	<p>To help prevent bleeding problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try not to bruise, cut or burn yourself.</li> <li>• Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose.</li> <li>• Avoid constipation.</li> <li>• Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily. Maintain good oral hygiene.</li> </ul> <p>Some medications such as ASA (e.g. ASPIRIN®) or ibuprofen (e.g. ADVIL®) may increase your risk of bleeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by your doctor (e.g. ASA for your heart)</li> <li>• For minor pain, try acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®) first, to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sore mouth</b> may sometimes occur. Mouth sores can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth, or in the throat. <b>Mouth sores or bleeding gums can lead to an infection.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a very soft toothbrush. If your gums bleed, use gauze instead of a brush. Use baking soda instead of toothpaste.</li> <li>• Make a mouthwash with ½ teaspoon baking soda or salt in 1 cup warm water and rinse several times a day.</li> <li>• Try soft, bland foods like puddings, milkshakes and cream soups.</li> <li>• Avoid spicy, crunchy or acidic food, and very hot or cold foods.</li> <li>• Try ideas in <i>Food Ideas to Try with a Sore Mouth*</i></li> </ul>

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS DURING TREATMENT	MANAGEMENT
<b>Pain or tenderness</b> may occur where the needle was placed.	Apply warm compresses or soak in warm water for 15 – 20 minutes several times a day.
<b>Muscle or joint pain</b> may commonly occur a few days after your treatment.	You may take acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®) every 4 – 6 hours to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day or ibuprofen (e.g. ADVIL®) for mild to moderate pain. Tell Your doctor if the pain interferes with your activity.
<b>Fever</b> may sometimes occur shortly after treatment with paclitaxel. Fever should last no longer than 24 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®) every 4 – 6 hours to a maximum of 4 g (4000 mg) per day.</li> <li>• Fever (over 100°F or 38°C by an oral thermometer) which occurs more than 48 hours after treatment may be a sign of an infection. Report this to your doctor <b>immediately</b>. See “white blood cells” above.</li> </ul>
<b>Diarrhea</b> may sometimes occur.	<p>If diarrhea is a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids.</li> <li>• Eat and drink often in small amounts.</li> <li>• Eat low fibre foods &amp; avoid high fibre foods as outlined in <i>Food Choices to Help Manage Diarrhea*</i></li> </ul>
<b>Constipation</b> may sometimes occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise if you can.</li> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids.</li> <li>• Try ideas in <i>Suggestions for Dealing with Constipation.*</i></li> </ul>
<b>Tiredness</b> and lack of energy may commonly occur.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not drive a car or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.</li> <li>• Try the ideas in handout titled <i>Fatigue/Tiredness*</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Hair loss</b> may occur, due to paclitaxel. Your hair may thin or you may lose it completely. Your scalp may feel tender. Hair loss may occur on your face and body. Hair will grow back once your treatments are over and sometimes between treatments. Colour and texture may change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush.</li> <li>• Care should be taken with use of hair spray, bleaches, dyes and perms.</li> <li>• If hair loss is a problem, refer to <i>Resources for Hair Loss and Appearance Changes*</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Numbness or tingling of the fingers or toes</b> may occur. This will slowly return to normal once your treatments are over. This may take several months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be careful when handling items that are sharp, hot or cold.</li> <li>• Tell your doctor at your next visit, especially if you have trouble with buttons, writing, or picking up small objects.</li> </ul>
<b>Skin rashes</b> may sometimes occur.	<p>To help itching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can use calamine lotion.</li> <li>• If very irritating, call your doctor during office hours.</li> <li>• Otherwise mention it at your next visit.</li> </ul>

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS DURING TREATMENT	MANAGEMENT
Loss of appetite may occur.	Try the ideas in <i>Food ideas to Help with Decreased Appetite*</i>
Swelling of hands, feet, or lower legs may sometimes occur if your body retains extra fluid.	If swelling is a problem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevate your feet when sitting.</li> <li>• Avoid tight clothing.</li> </ul>

**\*Please ask your chemotherapy nurse, pharmacist, or dietitian for a copy.**

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PATIENT**

- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to cisplatin (PLATINOL®, PLATINOL-AQ®), mannitol or paclitaxel before starting this treatment.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of treatment.
- Carboplatin may cause **sterility** in men and **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with carboplatin.
- Paclitaxel and carboplatin may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with these drugs. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- Tell doctors, dentist, and other health professionals that you are being treated with paclitaxel and carboplatin before you receive any treatment from them.

### **Medication Interactions:**

- Other drugs such as disulfiram (ANTABUSE®) and metronidazole (FLAGYL®) may interact with paclitaxel.
- Other drugs such as phenytoin (DILANTIN®) may interact with carboplatin.
- Other drugs such as warfarin (COUMADIN®) may interact with both paclitaxel and carboplatin.

Tell your doctor if you are taking these or any other drugs as you may need extra blood tests or your dose may need to be changes. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start or stop taking any other drugs.

## THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS VERY IMPORTANT

### SEE YOUR DOCTOR OR GET EMERGENCY HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of an **allergic reaction** soon after a treatment including dizziness, fast heart beat, face swelling, abdominal pain or breathing problems.
- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (over 100° F or 38° C by an oral thermometer); shaking chills; severe sore throat; cough; cloudy or foul smelling urine; pain or burning when passing urine; painful, tender, or swollen red skin wounds or sores.
- Signs of **bleeding problems** such as black, tarry stools; blood in urine; pinpoint red spots on skin.
- Signs of a **blood clot** such as tenderness or hardness over a vein, calf swelling and tenderness, sudden onset of cough, chest pain, or shortness of breath.
- Signs of **heart or lung problems** such as fast or uneven heartbeat, chest pain, chest pressure, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing swelling of feet or lower legs, or fainting.
- **Uncontrolled** nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

### SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:

- Signs of **anemia** such as unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Signs of **liver problems** such as yellow eyes or skin, white or clay-coloured stools.
- Signs of **kidney problems** such as lower back or side pain, swelling of feet or lower legs, numbness or tingling in feet or hands.
- **Changes in eyesight.**
- Ringing in your ears or **hearing problems.**
- **Skin rash or itching.**
- **Stomach pain** not controlled by antacids or acetaminophen.

### CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:

- Taste changes may occur.
- Uncontrolled constipation.
- Headache not controlled with acetaminophen (e.g. TYLENOL®)
- Easy bruising or minor bleeding.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores where the needle was placed.
- Redness, swelling, pain, or sores on your lips, tongue, mouth or throat.
- Nail changes.
- Abdominal discomfort including pain, bloating or cramping.
- Skin irritation where you may have had radiation treatments.

**If you experience symptoms or changes in your body that have not been described above but worry you, or if any symptoms are severe, contact:**

\_\_\_\_\_ at telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_