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## Gemcitabine: Patient drug information

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(For additional information [see "Gemcitabine: Drug information"](#) and [see "Gemcitabine: Pediatric drug information"](#))

**Brand Names: US** Gemzar

**Brand Names: Canada** Gemcitabine For Injection; Gemcitabine For Injection Concentrate; Gemcitabine For Injection, USP; Gemcitabine Hydrochloride For Injection; Gemcitabine Injection; Gemcitabine Sun For Injection; Gemzar

### What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat cancer.

### What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you have an allergy to gemcitabine or any other part of this drug.
- If you are allergic to any drugs like this one, any other drugs, foods, or other substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had, like rash; hives; itching; shortness of breath; wheezing; cough; swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat; or any other signs.
- If you are getting radiation.
- If you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

### What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.

- You may bleed more easily. Be careful and avoid injury. Use a soft toothbrush and an electric razor.
- Have blood work checked as you have been told by the doctor. Talk with the doctor.
- If you have had or will be having radiation treatment, talk with your doctor. Worse side effects from radiation treatment have happened with this drug.
- If you have upset stomach, throwing up, loose stools (diarrhea), or are not hungry, talk with your doctor. There may be ways to lower these side effects.
- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines. Use with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- This drug may cause a very bad and sometimes deadly problem called capillary leak syndrome (CLS). CLS may lead to low blood pressure and harm to the body. It may also lead to a heartbeat that is not normal, chest pain or pressure, heart attack, lung or breathing problems, bleeding or lower blood flow in the stomach or bowel, kidney problems, swelling, or feeling confused. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause very bad and sometimes deadly lung problems. Call your doctor right away if you have trouble breathing. These lung problems can happen up to 2 weeks after this drug is stopped.
- A very bad and sometimes deadly brain problem called posterior reversible encephalopathy syndrome (PRES) has happened with this drug. Call your doctor right away if you have signs like feeling confused, lowered alertness, change in eyesight, loss of eyesight, seizures, or very bad headache.
- Very bad and sometimes deadly kidney problems have happened with this drug. Kidney problems may not go away after this drug is stopped. Talk with the doctor.
- Very bad and sometimes deadly liver problems have happened with this drug. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of liver problems like dark urine, feeling tired, not hungry, upset stomach or stomach pain, light-colored stools, throwing up, or yellow skin or eyes.
- This drug may irritate the vein. It may burn the skin if the drug leaks from the vein when it is given. Tell your nurse if you have any redness, burning, pain, swelling, or leaking of fluid where the drug is going into your body.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant.
- Use birth control that you can trust to prevent pregnancy while taking this drug.
- If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.

## What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Signs of bleeding like throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds; coughing up blood; blood in the urine; black, red, or tarry stools; bleeding from the gums; vaginal bleeding that is not normal; bruises without a reason or that get bigger; or any bleeding that is very bad or that you cannot stop.
- Signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, more thirst, more hungry, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Signs of electrolyte problems like mood changes, confusion, muscle pain or weakness, a heartbeat

that does not feel normal, seizures, not hungry, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.

- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- Shortness of breath.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Mood changes.
- This drug may cause a health problem called hemolytic-uremic syndrome. Very bad problems may happen in some patients who get this health problem. Call your doctor right away if you are feeling very tired or weak or have any signs of bleeding or bruising, change in color of urine, change in how much urine is passed, a fever, or swelling of the face, hands, feet or body.

## **What are some other side effects of this drug?**

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Flu-like signs. These include headache, weakness, fever, shakes, aches, pains, and sweating.
- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Loose stools (diarrhea).
- Not hungry.
- Hard stools (constipation).
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Hair loss.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Headache.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

## **How is this drug best taken?**

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- It is given as an infusion into a vein over a period of time.

## **What do I do if I miss a dose?**

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

## **How do I store and/or throw out this drug?**

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

## General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Keep a list of all your drugs (prescription, natural products, vitamins, OTC) with you. Give this list to your doctor.
- Talk with the doctor before starting any new drug, including prescription or OTC, natural products, or vitamins.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Check with your pharmacist about how to throw out unused drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

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