

Tays / cancer treatment

## **White cell growth factor treatment during chemotherapy**

Chemotherapy treatments affect the normal function of the bone marrow which shows, among other symptoms, as a decrease in white blood cells (leukocytes). Decreased white blood cell count makes you more sensitive to inflammation. You will start a treatment to increase the white blood cell count to reduce the risk of infection. This is carried out with a white blood cell growth factor that accelerates the production of white blood cells in the bone marrow.

The white blood cell growth factor may temporarily cause bone ache. If needed, you can take regular pain killers (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen) if you have taken them before for other pain. If the pain is severe and the basic pain medication is not sufficient, contact the treatment unit to obtain stronger pain medication. Usually the ache caused by the white blood cell growth factor becomes easier after the first injection.

Most white blood cell growth factors must be kept in the refrigerator, but this varies depending on the product. The nurse and pharmacist will provide instructions on how to store the medicine correctly.

### **Dosage**

WBC growth factor treatment is usually administered by a subcutaneous injection on the day after treatment. The nurse will provide instructions on the use of the specific product.

Before the injection, wash your hands carefully and open the package by removing the back paper or opening the safety guard completely. If the syringe is fitted with a safety device, bend it away from the needle cap. Pull the needle cap off. Be careful with the needle tip.

Inject the needle into the subcutaneous tissue, not into muscle or a blood vessel. Do not remove the bubble from the syringe as it helps bring the medicine out of the syringe and is harmless. The best site for the injection is the subcutaneous tissue in the abdomen. Alternate the injection site after the treatments. Never inject into the bellybutton.

### **Injection instructions**

- Clean the injection site with a disinfectant wipe. Let the skin dry.
- Gently pinch the skin between your thumb and forefinger.
- Push the needle straight to the middle of the skin fold.
- Empty the syringe slowly by pushing the plunger all the way down.
- Release the skin fold and pull the syringe out. Be careful with the needle.
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### **Disposal of used syringes**

Collect used syringes, including the needles, in a covered container and bring them to a pharmacy or health centre for disposal. If the syringe comes in a safety tube, you can put the used syringe into the tube and dispose of it in mixed waste; otherwise it must be brought to a pharmacy. Put the used syringe into the safety tube with the needle first and the safety device bent. Push the lid down until it locks in the groove on the inside edge of the tube.

Tays / cancer treatment

**Bruising or a lump on the injection site**

You might notice a small bruise or lump on the site. This is harmless. Do not inject into the same spot again.

**Contact the medical personnel if you have:**

- temperature over 38°C
- bleeding symptoms: large bruises, bleeding gums, persistent nosebleeds, gynaecological bleeding, haemoptysis, vomiting blood, black stool or haematoma
- severe abdominal pain, prolonged constipation or diarrhoea
- persistent and continuous vomiting for more than a day despite medication
- extensive rash or other hypersensitivity reaction
- confusion, convulsions
- before the next treatment, e.g. symptoms of flu, fever, abdominal pains or other symptoms

The phone number for the pharmacotherapy unit of the oncology outpatient clinic is 03 311 63468. We have a call-back service. Follow the instructions and we will call you back.

Contact the inpatient wards if any issues arise on weekends, nights and evenings:

Oncology Ward RS1, telephone 03 311 63311  
Oncology Ward RS2, telephone 03 311 63312  
Medical Helpline, tel. 116 117