

## How to Take Temozolomide (Temodar)

*For patients at Alvord Brain Tumor Center*

*This handout explains how to take the drug temozolomide (Temodar), which is used to treat certain types of brain cancer.*

### Temodar Therapies

There are 2 types of Temodar therapy. Your doctor has prescribed the therapy checked below.



*Take your Temodar exactly as prescribed.*

#### Concurrent Therapy

*Concurrent* therapy is given **while** you are having radiation.

- You will take Temodar every day for either 42 days (6 weeks) or 21 days (3 weeks) in a row. Do not take your first dose of Temodar until your nurse reviews your blood tests.
- You will start Temodar the night before your first radiation treatment. This timing may be different if you are part of a clinical trial. Your nurse will tell you exactly when to start.
- You must have a blood draw once a week while on Temodar therapy.
- You might finish the Temodar doses before your radiation treatment is over. This is because radiation is weekdays only, but chemotherapy is every single day.

#### Adjuvant Therapy

*Adjuvant* therapy is given **after** your course of radiation is over.

- Your therapy cycle is 28 days long. You will take Temodar every night for the first 5 days of the cycle. Then, you will have 23 days off.
- Around day 26, you will need to come for a clinic visit and have a blood draw.
- Wait to start your next cycle until we review your blood tests. Your nurse will let you know the day you can start.

## What do I need to do before starting therapy?

- You will need a blood draw.
- Women of childbearing age **must** take a pregnancy test.
- Get your prescriptions filled. We will prescribe:
  - An anti-nausea medicine called Zofran (ondansetron)
  - Senna and Miralax, 2 bowel medicines to prevent constipation
  - An antibiotic called Bactrim to prevent lung infections (used while you are on radiation)
- You may receive capsules of different strengths when you fill your Temodar prescription. If this happens, you must combine pills to make up your total dose. Read your prescription label very carefully. Make sure you are taking your prescribed dose each night.

## How do I take Temodar?

- Take your Zofran 30 to 60 minutes **before** taking your Temodar.
- Take Temodar:
  - At bedtime, at the same time each night.
  - On an empty stomach (2 hours after or 1 hour before a meal).
  - With 8 ounces of water. Do **not** take it with any other liquid.
- Swallow the capsules whole. Do **not** chew, open, or crush them.

## What if I miss a dose?

If you miss a dose, or vomit up your pill, please call your nurse (see the “Questions” box on page 3 for your nurse’s number). Wait for your nurse to tell you what to do. Do **not** take an extra dose.

## Are there any safety concerns?

Temodar is a strong chemotherapy drug. Because of this:

- **Only you** should touch your Temodar capsules. Wash your hands after handling them.
- If a caregiver must handle the capsules, they **must** wear disposable rubber gloves and throw the gloves away after handling the drug.

During treatment and for 48 hours after you take your last dose of Temodar, some of the drug may be present in your body. For safety:

- Caregivers should wear gloves when helping in cleanup of body fluids, such as urine, stool, or vomit.

## What are possible side effects?

### Nausea

You will receive a prescription for the anti-nausea medicine Zofran. You will take this before each chemotherapy dose. It can also be taken every 8 hours as needed. If you are taking the Zofran every 8 hours and it does not ease your nausea, contact your nurse.

### Constipation

Temodar and Zofran may cause constipation (hard stool). You will be receiving 2 bowel medicines to help if you do get constipated:

- *Senna* is a mild laxative that you can take morning or night with or without food. Take it as needed. Some patients start taking this every day to prevent constipation.
- *Miralax* is a stronger laxative you mix with water or juice. Take it as needed.

#### To prevent constipation:

- Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated
- Eat foods that are high in fiber
- Stay active by walking 30 minutes a day if you are able to.

#### Please note:

- If you have diarrhea while taking Senna or Miralax, stop taking them.
- If constipation lasts longer than 2 days, contact your nurse.

### Low White Blood Cell Count

Chemotherapy lowers the number of white blood cells (WBCs) in your body. These cells fight infection. When you have fewer WBCs, you are at higher risk for an infection.

Call your nurse if you have **ANY** of these signs of infection:

- A fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C)
- Burning when you urinate (pee)
- A cough that brings up mucus
- Body aches or chills
- Any sores on your body that are red or have drainage

## Lower Platelet Count

Chemotherapy puts you at risk for a low platelet count or bleeding. Call your nurse if you have:

- A bloody nose that lasts longer than 5 minutes
- A lot of new bruising
- A lot of bleeding from your gums when you brush or floss
- Any skin bleeding that won't stop even when you apply pressure

## Fatigue

You may be more tired than usual, but it is important to remain active. Try and get outside to walk about 30 minutes a day.

## Fertility Issues

Chemotherapy may affect your ability to have a child. Please talk with your doctor about your concerns if you haven't already.

## Precautions

### Sex and Birth Control

During Temodar therapy:

- If you are a woman, do **not** become pregnant or breastfeed.
- If you are a man, do **not** get a partner pregnant.
- If you are of childbearing age, use **2** effective forms of birth control, both during Temodar therapy and for at least 1 month after your last dose. Read our birth control handout to learn about your options.

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

#### To talk with a nurse:

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call 206.598.2282 and select option #2.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call our Community Care Line at 206.598.3300.

### Vaccines

During Temodar therapy:

- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines
- Avoid live vaccines

### Alcohol

Please avoid alcohol on the days you take Temodar. This applies whether you take your Temodar by mouth or IV.

Talk with your ABTC team if not drinking alcohol on your chemotherapy days would be hard for you.