

Vincristine

Oncovin

This handout explains the drug vincristine, which is used to treat cancer. It also tells how to manage common side effects.

What is vincristine?

Vincristine is a chemotherapy drug used to treat cancer. One brand of the drug is Oncovin. Vincristine is usually used with other chemotherapy drugs to slow or stop cancer cell growth.

How do I take vincristine?

Vincristine is given by injection at the 8-Southeast Infusion Center at UWMC - Montlake. Your doctor or nurse will tell you when it is time for your vincristine injection.

- Take your anti-nausea medicine ondansetron (Zofran) 60 minutes (1 hour) **before** you receive your vincristine injection.
- You will be in the Infusion Center for about 90 minutes (about 1½ hours).
- Do **not** drink grapefruit juice the morning of your injection and for 1 week after.

What side effects can I expect?

The table on the next page shows side effects that can occur with vincristine treatments, and what to do about them. Other side effects may also occur. **Please report any symptoms to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.**



You will receive vincristine as an injection at our Infusion Center.

Side Effects	What to Do
Nausea	Take ondansetron 1 hour before your dose of vincristine and as needed for nausea. Read your prescription for dose and timing. Call your ABTC nurse if ondansetron does not ease your nausea or vomiting. Help prevent nausea by eating small meals often during the day.
Constipation <i>Vincristine and ondansetron may cause hard stool.</i>	To prevent constipation, stay active, drink lots of liquids, and eat a diet high in fiber. Take bowel medicines as prescribed, unless you have loose stools or diarrhea. If you have constipation for 2 days, call your ABTC nurse and ask what to do.
Vision changes	Call your ABTC nurse if you have any vision changes or discomfort in your eyes.
Peripheral neuropathy	Call your ABTC nurse if you have numbness or tingling in your fingers or toes, weakness, or changes in your sense of touch such as a burning feeling or skin pain.
Decreased white blood cells <i>Chemotherapy puts you at risk for an infection due to low white blood cell counts.</i>	Call your ABTC nurse if you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C) • Burning when you urinate (pee) • A sore that becomes red, has drainage, or doesn't start to heal • A cough with mucus
Decreased platelets <i>Chemotherapy puts you at risk for a low platelet count or bleeding.</i>	Call your ABTC nurse if you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sore that oozes even when you apply pressure • A lot of bleeding from your gums when you brush or floss your teeth • A bloody nose that lasts longer than 5 minutes • A lot of bruising
Fertility <i>Chemotherapy may affect your ability to have a child.</i>	Please talk with your doctor or nurse if you have questions about fertility.
Fatigue	You may feel tired, but it is important to be active. Try to walk about 30 minutes a day.
Hair loss (alopecia)	Your hair will grow back after your vincristine treatment is over.

Safety Warnings

Birth Control (Contraception)

- Women will have a pregnancy test done before starting chemotherapy.
- While taking vincristine and for 2 months after your injection:
 - 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 birth control.
- **For 1 week after your injection:** Use a barrier form of protection during sex. The drug stays in body fluids for 1 week after the injection.

Handling

Caregivers should wear gloves when helping clean up any of the patient's body fluids, such as urine or vomit.

Vaccines

While you are taking vincristine:

- Do **not** receive live vaccines.
- Avoid contact with anyone who has received a live vaccine within the last 6 weeks.
- Talk with your provider **before** getting any vaccines.

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.