

## Oxaliplatin

**Names** The generic drug name is oxaliplatin (ox-AL-i-pla-tin). Eloxatin™ is a brand name. There may be other names for this medication

**Why am I Taking Oxaliplatin and How is it Administered?** Oxaliplatin, along with other medications, treats advanced colon and rectal cancers. It is usually given in combination with other medications. Your medication will be given by injection into a vein (intravenous or IV), usually in your arm, wrist, hand or chest, usually every 14 days.

**How Does it Work?** Cancers are diseases in which abnormal cells reproduce uncontrollably. Your chemo schedule is based upon:

- your cancer type and how fast the cancer cells reproduce
- the phase of the cell cycle when the chemo is most effective – the resting, growing, or reproduction phases

With these factors in mind, your doctors create a chemo schedule to give each medication when it will do the most damage to the cancer cells.

Oxaliplatin is in a class of drugs known as platinum-containing compounds (metal salts); it is also an alkylating agent.

Many chemo medications identify and attack cancer cells because they reproduce quickly. Some cells in your body normally reproduce quickly and they are likely to be damaged by chemo. These normal cells will eventually grow back and be healthy. During treatment, however, you may experience side effects from chemo's effects on these cells.

**What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?** Tell your doctor if you:

- have ever had an allergic reaction to oxaliplatin, platinum, or other medicines that contain platinum (Paraplatin®, Platinol®)
- have or ever had kidney disease
- are taking medications that affect your blood's ability to clot, such as warfarin (Coumadin®), aspirin, or ibuprofen
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

**This drug may interact with other medications or cause harmful side effects. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal, or diet supplements that you are taking.**

What Are Some Possible Side Effects I May Experience?

- Numbness, tingling, burning, and cramping of the hands or feet; decreased sense of touch; increased sensitivity, especially to cold (Symptoms get better between treatments but the more treatments you have, the longer it may take for the symptoms to improve)
- Low blood counts - low levels of white blood cells, red blood cells, and/or platelets, which can increase your risk for infection, fatigue, and/or bleeding
- Nausea, vomiting, heartburn, loss of appetite, change in the sense of taste
- Diarrhea and/or constipation
- Sores in the mouth or throat
- Fatigue
- Headache; muscle, back, or joint pain
- Sleep problems, anxiety, and/or depression
- Hair thinning or loss
- Dry skin, redness or peeling of the skin on the hands and feet, sweating, and/or flushing

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- **Drink 2-3 quarts of water every day unless your doctor tells you to limit your fluids.** This is even more important in the days before and after you have chemotherapy. This will help flush the medications out and help prevent dehydration and constipation. Try to drink a variety of fluids to help provide the calories, sodium (salt), and other electrolytes your body needs. Broths are a good source of sodium, and some sports drinks provide additional electrolytes (check the labels).
- Avoid cold temperatures and cold objects. Cover your skin if you must go outside in cold weather. Do not drink cold drinks or use ice cubes. Do not put ice or ice packs on your body.
- To help avoid infections, stay away from people with colds or other infections. Wash your hands often. Talk to your doctor before you have any vaccinations, such as a flu shot.
- If you are fatigued, take rests during the day, and limit your activities to the time of day when you have the most energy. Learn to ask for and accept help with household chores.
- Be careful when handling sharp objects. Avoid rough sports or other situations that could cause bruising or injury. Use an electric razor.
- Ask your doctor about medication to help prevent or lessen nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Talk to your doctor before using over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine.

## When Should I Call the Doctor?

- Mouth care is very important. Rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ tsp of baking soda in 8 ounces of water after every meal and at bedtime. Brush your teeth and gums often with soft toothbrush. (Soften it further by running it under warm water before brushing).
- Avoid smoking, drinking alcohol, and using mouthwash that contains alcohol.

**Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department if you have life-threatening symptoms such as** signs of severe allergic reaction: Swelling or tingling in your face, tongue, mouth, or throat; chest tightness; wheezing; trouble breathing or swallowing; dizziness, shortness of breath; heart palpitations; or hives.

Please let us know if you go to the emergency room or are admitted to the hospital.

### **Call your doctor immediately if you have:**

- any sign of infection: **Fever of 100.4°F (38°C)** or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, pain or burning upon urination; redness or tenderness along a vein, at an IV site, or at any other wound or skin irritation
- unusual bruising or bleeding: Bleeding lasts more than 10-15 minutes or that causes dizziness; black or bloody stools; vomit that is bloody or that looks like coffee grounds; blood in your urine or phlegm /mucus, unusually heavy menstrual bleeding, spontaneous bleeding from your gums or nose, or superficial bleeding into the skin that appears as a rash of pinpoint-sized reddish-purple spots (petechiae)
- chest pressure or pain
- severe headache or problems with vision, balance, or speaking
- severe stomach pain with nausea and vomiting

### **Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have:**

- nausea, vomiting, or headache that is not relieved by prescribed medication or that prevents you from eating or drinking
- diarrhea of 5-6 stools in 1 day, diarrhea with weakness, or no bowel movement for 3 days
- increased pain, swelling, burning, or numbness in your arms/legs

What Else Should I  
Know About  
Oxaliplatin?

- Exposure to cold air or objects may worsen some side effects. For 5 days after each dose: drink beverages at room temperature or warmer. Do not touch any cold objects, go near freezers or air conditioners, wash your hands in cold water, or go out in cold weather unless absolutely necessary. If you must go out in the cold, wear a hat and gloves, and cover your mouth and nose with a scarf.
- Use reliable birth control to prevent pregnancy during your treatment. Barrier methods such as condoms and diaphragms are recommended. Oxaliplatin may cause harm to a fetus.
- Do not breast feed during your treatment.
- Tell all your doctors and dentists you are receiving oxaliplatin.
- Keep all your doctor and lab appointments.
- Talk to your doctor for more information about oxaliplatin.