Oxaliplatin Induced Peripheral Neuropathy

Registered dietitians and pharmacists have prepared this guide for your use. If you have questions or concerns, please call your nearest Aurora Health Care facility to speak to a health care professional.

Why do you need oxaliplatin?
Oxaliplatin is a drug used to treat some forms of cancer.

How is it given?
It is given through your IV line.

What side effects might you have?
Possible side effects include nausea, vomiting, rash, dry mouth, diarrhea, low white blood count and peripheral neuropathy. Peripheral neuropathy means that there are abnormal sensations involving parts of your body, such as the hands and feet. With each cycle, your chance of having symptoms increases and more parts of the body may be affected. This neuropathy may also be increased with cold temperatures or cold objects.

What are the symptoms of peripheral neuropathy?
Symptoms can be short term or long lasting:
• Short term: Numbness, prickling, tingling, less/loss of sensation, or increased feeling in fingers, toes, and the area around the mouth and throat. Rarely, someone may experience difficulty swallowing, coughing or breathing.
• Long lasting: This type of neuropathy can occur without any prior short-term neuropathy. The symptoms may include the above short-term symptoms, plus decreased awareness of body position, difficulty moving, and tingling or burning pain in the arms, legs or the entire body. These symptoms may or may not interfere with daily activities.

When do symptoms begin?
Symptoms usually begin anywhere from several hours to three days after infusion. They can occur as long as 14 days after treatment. Most cases occur within the first 3 days (72 hours).

How long do symptoms last?
Short-term symptoms can last for up to two weeks with each cycle. Long term symptoms last longer than two weeks. The symptoms may lessen when the therapy is stopped. Communicate symptoms with your physician if they persist more than 14 days.

What if you experience the symptoms?
Warm up with extra blankets or hot water. Discuss with your physician.

How can these symptoms be prevented?
The side effects increase when a person feels cold. To lessen the discomfort, keep your body warm and avoid cold temperatures or coming in contact with cold items. You should follow these measures of prevention during treatment of oxaliplatin and at least one month after treatment is complete.

What should I do during the infusion of oxaliplatin?
• Wrap yourself in blankets to keep warm
• Breathe through a mask or scarf
• Increase the temperature in the room
• Eat and drink only warm or room temperature foods and beverages

What should I do during the time I am being treated with oxaliplatin and at least one month after the treatment is complete?
• Dress warmly
• Use gloves when reaching in the refrigerator
• Use warm water temperature for washing
• Avoid ice chips, even if your mouth is sore or dry
• Eat foods that are room temperature or warmer
• Drink only warm or room temperature liquids

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Are room temperature foods safe to eat?
• Bacteria grow very quickly in foods with temperatures in the “danger zone.” This “danger zone” is between 40º and 140º F, or room temperature foods
• Foods most at risk for bacteria growth are: those containing meat, poultry, fish, eggs and milk products, and foods that will not be well cooked before eating

What do you need to do to keep room temperature foods safe to eat?
• Refrigerate foods quickly after purchase
• Store foods in the refrigerator until just before use
• Foods needing refrigeration such as milk, yogurt, cheese, sandwich meats and cooked foods should not be kept at room temperature longer than two hours
• Use a microwave to quickly warm foods, not the kitchen countertop

Any other tips for preparing foods?
• Keep your kitchen surfaces and utensils very clean
• Consider disposable cutting sheets (Saran™), or use separate cutting boards for produce (fruits and vegetables) and raw meats
• Foods that are cooked ahead should be quickly cooled in the refrigerator, and then reheated just before eating
• Heat leftover foods to 165º F, or steaming hot
• Leftover sauces, soups, and liquids should be heated to a rolling boil
• Discard leftovers after three to four days