

Granulocyte Colony Stimulating Factor (GCSF) during Chemotherapy

A patient's guide

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1. Why am I being given GCSF?

Your bone marrow is responsible for producing white blood cells to help fight infection. Chemotherapy can affect your bone marrow, reducing your ability to make new white blood cells = neutropenia. GCSF can help your body make more.

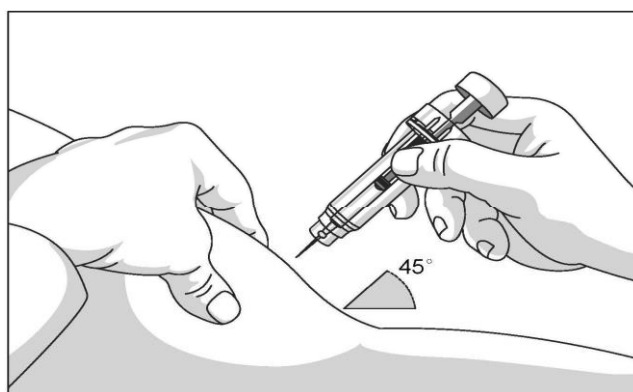
2. What is GCSF?

It is a growth factor protein which can stimulate the bone marrow to make white blood cells. These can help fight infection.

The number of white blood cells usually goes back to normal in between cycles of chemotherapy but if they are too low, chemotherapy may have to be delayed. GCSF encourages the growth of your white blood cells, allowing treatment to be given on time and reducing your risk of infection.

3. How is GCSF given?

GCSF comes in a pre-filled syringe and is usually given as an injection under the skin (subcutaneously). The injection site is usually rotated throughout treatment. You can be taught to inject GCSF so you can have it at home.



4. When do you need it?

It is usually started 24 hours or more after the intravenous chemotherapy finishes and given daily for five days. The precise dose and instructions will be on the label of your box and you will be told of this.

5. Storing GCSF

Please store in the fridge. Take the injection out of the fridge 30 minutes before use.

6. Other Medicines

Tell your doctor about any medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter, herbal and complementary therapies. We recommend buying Paracetamol and Ibuprofen tablets when you first start this therapy.

7. What to expect when you take GCSF

Some patients commonly develop all over bone pain or muscle aches. Sometimes this can be associated with a raised temperature. If you get any bone or muscle aches, take the prescribed Ibuprofen 400mg with 1 gram of Paracetamol together.

This can be repeated up to four times in a 24hr period and should reduce these troublesome symptoms.

Sitting for long periods of time may make the bone pain worse so walking can help. Other techniques which have helped patients include having a soak with bath salts e.g. Radox Muscle Soak which can help relieve the pain.

If the symptoms persist despite 48hrs of regular supportive medicines as described above please use the suggested contact numbers below.

To help you manage other side effects that can occur whilst taking GCSF please see the chart below.

<p>Red</p> <p>Stop taking GCSF injections and contact doctor immediately!</p>	<p>Allergic reaction – rash, swallowing or breathing problems, swelling</p>
	<p>Acute severe tummy pain</p>
	<p>Bleeding that does not stop after five minutes.</p>
	<p>Red skin with purple spots – pain in limbs.</p>
<p>Amber</p> <p>Continue GCSF and take supportive medication. If the problem persists despite medication, seek help.</p>	<p>Feeling sick or reduced appetite</p> <p>Action: Improves after treatment stops. Talk to your doctor for anti-sickness.</p>
	<p>Bruising or bleeding easily.</p> <p>Action: Improves after treatment stops.</p>
	<p>Bowel changes – constipation/diarrhoea</p> <p>Action: Improves after treatment stops. Drink plenty of water!</p>
	<p>Red, itchy skin on limbs</p> <p>Action: Creams, rotate injection site. Improves after treatment stops.</p>
<p>Green</p> <p>Continue GCSF and take supportive medication.</p>	<p>Raised temperature and chills.</p> <p>Action: Paracetamol</p>
	<p>Bone pain – pelvis, back, arm or legs</p> <p>Action: Ibuprofen and Paracetamol</p>
	<p>Headaches</p> <p>Action: Ibuprofen and Paracetamol</p>

Contact Details:

24/7 Hotline: 0207 288 3192

Pharmacist (09:00-17:30): 078 7614 5361

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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