This handout explains the drug vincristine, which is used to treat cancer. The handout includes 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. 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 injection of vincristine.
- You will be in the Infusion Center for about 1½ hours (90 minutes).
- Do not drink grapefruit juice the morning of your injection and for 1 week after.

**What side effects can I expect?**

The table below 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Side Effects</th>
<th>What to Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nausea</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td><strong>Side Effects</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Constipation</strong>&lt;br&gt;Vincristine and ondansetron may cause constipation (hard stool).</td>
<td>To prevent constipation, stay active, drink lots of liquids, and eat a diet high in fiber. Take bowel medicines as prescribed unless loose stools or diarrhea occur. If you have constipation for 2 days, call your ABTC nurse and ask what to do.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Vision changes</strong></td>
<td>Call your ABTC nurse if you have any vision changes or discomfort in your eyes.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Peripheral neuropathy</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decreased white blood cells</strong>&lt;br&gt;Chemotherapy puts you at risk for an infection due to low white blood cell counts.</td>
<td>Call your ABTC nurse if you have:&lt;ul&gt;&lt;li&gt;A fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C)&lt;/li&gt;&lt;li&gt;Burning when you urinate (pee)&lt;/li&gt;&lt;li&gt;A sore that becomes red, has drainage, or doesn’t start to heal&lt;/li&gt;&lt;li&gt;A cough with mucus&lt;/li&gt;&lt;/ul&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decreased platelets</strong>&lt;br&gt;Chemotherapy puts you at risk for a low platelet count or bleeding.</td>
<td>Call your ABTC nurse if you have:&lt;ul&gt;&lt;li&gt;A sore that oozes even when you apply pressure&lt;/li&gt;&lt;li&gt;A lot of bleeding from your gums when you brush or floss your teeth&lt;/li&gt;&lt;li&gt;A bloody nose that lasts longer than 5 minutes&lt;/li&gt;&lt;li&gt;A lot of bruising&lt;/li&gt;&lt;/ul&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fertility</strong>&lt;br&gt;Chemotherapy may affect your ability to have a child.</td>
<td>Please talk with your doctor or nurse if you have questions about fertility.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fatigue</strong></td>
<td>You may feel tired, but it is important to be active. Try to walk about 30 minutes a day.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Safety Warnings

Birth Control (Contraception)

- Women will have a pregnancy test done 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 body fluids.
- The patient’s linens and clothing should be washed apart from other laundry items.

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 vaccinated.

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 the Alvord Brain Tumor Center Nurse Line at 206.598.9467.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.744.2500. You will be given the option to speak with a nurse at the Community Care Line.