

Amifostine Injections

Before your radiation treatments

This handout is for patients who will receive amifostine before their radiation treatments.

What is amifostine?

Amifostine is a drug that is given to cancer patients who are receiving chemotherapy and radiation therapy. It helps reduce some of the side effects of these treatments. A common brand name for this drug is Ethyol.

How is it given?

We will give you an amifostine injection before every radiation treatment. This injection will be under your skin (*subcutaneous*).

After your injection, a nurse will monitor your blood pressure. When your pressure is stable, your nurse will discharge you. You may then go to the clinic for your radiation therapy.



Amifostine is given by subcutaneous injection.

How do I prepare?

- If you take high blood pressure medicine or *diuretics* (water pills), talk with your doctor. Ask what time you should take your medicines.
- Please check in on time. **We cannot order your amifostine from the pharmacy until you check in for your injection appointment.**

What are the side effects?

Tell your provider if you have any of these common side effects:

- Low blood pressure: This can occur within 15 minutes of receiving the injection. It often resolves within 5 to 10 minutes.
- Nausea and vomiting: This usually resolves within 24 hours.
- Feeling lightheaded or dizzy
- Feeling drowsy

- Sneezing and hiccups
- Fever
- Rash or redness at the injection site

Tell your nurse right away if you have signs of an allergic reaction, such as:

- Being short of breath
- All-over body rash

What can I do to manage these side effects?

- Your doctor has prescribed an antihistamine for you. This may be Zyrtec or Claritin, or another brand.
 - Take your antihistamine starting 2 days before your first amifostine injection.
 - Keep taking your antihistamine every day after that.
- Your doctor has prescribed an anti-nausea medicine for you. This may be Zofran or another brand.
 - Take your anti-nausea medicine 2 hours before your amifostine injection.
 - Take your anti-nausea medicine every 8 hours for nausea, as needed.
- Drink plenty of fluids the day before your treatment, and during the day you receive amifostine. Stay hydrated. Being dehydrated can increase the side effects from amifostine.
- Eat and drink often, in small amounts.
- Check your injection site every night for rash or redness. If you see redness at the site:
 - Apply 1% hydrocortisone cream to the area. You can buy this product without a prescription at most drugstores.
 - Tell your nurse the next day about the redness.
- If you have an all-over body rash or redness, call for help **right away**:
 - Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call your nurse at 206.598.4100.
 - After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Radiation Oncology resident on call.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call Radiation Oncology at 206.598.4100.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Radiation Oncologist resident on call.

What else should I know?

For your safety, do **not** drive if you feel drowsy, lightheaded, or dizzy.