

## Pembrolizumab

*Keytruda*

*This handout for patients at Alvord Brain Tumor Center explains pembrolizumab, an immunotherapy drug that is used to treat cancer.*

### What is pembrolizumab?

Pembrolizumab is an *immunotherapy* drug. It works with your immune system to help find and fight cancer cells. But, it can also affect some normal cells and cause side effects.

### How will I receive it?

Pembrolizumab is given as an infusion through an *intravenous* (IV) line into a vein in your arm.

### What happens on infusion day?

- Please arrive at UWMC - Montlake campus at least 90 minutes before your infusion appointment.
  - **If you do not have a central line:** Go to the Outpatient Lab on the main level (3rd floor) of the hospital for a blood draw.
  - **If you do have a central line:** You will have your blood drawn at the Alvord Brain Tumor Center (ABTC).

If you wish, you can have your blood drawn at a lab closer to home 1 to 2 days before your infusion. Please talk with your ABTC nurse about this option.

- After your blood draw, go to the 8-Southeast Infusion Center for your infusion. Take the Cascade elevators to the 8th floor.
- Plan on being in the Infusion Center for at least 1 hour for the infusion process. The infusion itself will take 30 minutes.



*You will receive this drug as an infusion into a vein in your arm.*

## What side effects can I expect?

### Reactions to Your First Infusion

If you react to your first infusion, you may have chills, shaking, shortness of breath or wheezing, itching or rash, flushing, dizziness, or fever. You may feel like you will pass out.

Tell your nurse or doctor **right away** if you have any of these reactions or other symptoms during your first infusion. The nurse may slow the infusion or give you medicines to treat the reaction.

These reactions are rare with later infusions.

### Common Side Effects During Treatment

The table below shows common side effects that can occur with pembrolizumab treatments, and what to do about them.

Other side effects may also occur. Please report any symptoms to your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse.

Common Side Effects	What to Do
<b>Fatigue</b>	Even if you feel very tired, it is important to keep active. Try to get outside and walk about 30 minutes a day, if you can.
<b>Loss of appetite</b>	You may not feel like eating as much, but it is important to keep up with your nutrition. If you are eating less food than normal, please talk with your nurse.
<b>Muscle, bone, or joint pain</b>	You may feel aches and pain. Please tell your nurse if the pain is severe.
<b>Bowel changes</b> Constipation or diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To prevent constipation:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Drink plenty of water</li><li>- Eat foods that are high in fiber</li><li>- Stay active, walking 30 minutes every day</li></ul></li><li>• If you have diarrhea, stop taking all laxatives.</li><li>• Tell your nurse if diarrhea or constipation lasts longer than 2 days.</li></ul>

## Serious Side Effects During Treatment

The table below shows side effects from pembrolizumab treatment that could be serious. **Tell your nurse RIGHT AWAY if you have any of these symptoms:**

Serious Side Effects	Symptoms
<b>Skin problems</b>	Rash, itching, blisters, skin sores or peeling, painful sores or ulcers in your mouth, nose, throat, or genital area
<b>Lung problems</b> ( <i>pneumonitis</i> )	Shortness of breath, chest pain, or new or worse cough
<b>Intestinal problems</b> ( <i>colitis</i> ) Some intestinal problems can lead to tears or holes in your intestine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diarrhea or more bowel movements than usual</li><li>• Stools that are black, sticky, or have blood or mucus</li><li>• Severe pain or tenderness in your belly (<i>abdomen</i>)</li></ul>
<b>Liver problems</b> (including <i>hepatitis</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yellowing of your skin or the whites of your eyes</li><li>• Nausea or vomiting</li><li>• Pain on the right side of your belly (<i>abdomen</i>)</li><li>• Dark urine</li><li>• Bleeding or bruising more easily than normal</li></ul>
<b>Hormone gland problems</b> Hormone glands include the thyroid, pituitary, adrenals, and pancreas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rapid heartbeat</li><li>• Weight loss or gain</li><li>• Increased sweating</li><li>• Feeling more hungry or thirsty than usual</li><li>• Urinating more often than usual</li><li>• Hair loss</li><li>• Feeling cold</li><li>• Constipation</li><li>• A deeper tone to your voice</li><li>• Muscle aches</li><li>• Dizziness or fainting</li><li>• Unusual headaches or a headache that will not go away</li></ul>

## Precautions

During pembrolizumab therapy:

- If you are a woman, do **not** become pregnant or breastfeed.
- If you are a man, do **not** get a partner pregnant.
- Use 2 forms of effective birth control during treatment and for at least 4 months after your last dose of pembrolizumab.

### 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 206.598.2282 and select option 2.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call our Community Care Line at 206.598.3300.