

PHARMACY

Drug Information

FOLFIRI Regimen [Fluorouracil, Leucovorin, Irinotecan]



What is FOLFIRI Regimen?

- FOLFIRI regimen is usually given for the treatment of colon and rectal cancer. It consists of three different drugs: Leucovorin (Folinic acid), Fluorouracil and Irinotecan.
- Leucovorin is not a chemotherapy drug. It is often given with Fluorouracil, as it's been shown to make it work better.

How is FOLFIRI Regimen Administered?

- FOLFIRI is given as separate injections into your vein (intravenous) every 14 days.
- On the first day of treatment, you are given Irinotecan and Folinic acid as a drip (infusion). After this, you will have Fluorouracil given as an intravenous injection followed by an infusion over 46 hours via a small portable pump. You can go home once the infusion starts and return two days later for the nurse to disconnect your pump when your infusion is completed.

Can FOLFIRI Regimen be Administered With Other Medications?

- Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications, including Traditional Chinese Medicines, Jamu medicine or supplements.

What are the Important Side Effects of FOLFIRI Regimen?

Inform the nurses immediately during infusion of FOLFIRI if you experience the following:

- Allergic reaction

FOLFIRI may rarely cause an allergic reaction while it's being given. Signs of a reaction may include: rashes, flushed or shortness of breath, swelling of your face or lips, feeling dizzy, having pain in your stomach, back or chest or feeling unwell.

- Medications prescribed by your doctor should be beneficial for your condition even though they may result in some inevitable side effects.

Side Effect	Management
Nausea or vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small frequent meals or sucking hard, sugar-free candy may help. Please remember to take the medicines for nausea or vomiting as instructed by your doctor.
Lethargy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not drive or operate machinery if you are feeling tired.
Hair Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear a wig or hat or use a gentle shampoo.
Risk of infection can occur as FOLFIRI regimen can reduce the number of white blood cells in your blood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prevent infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wash your hands after using the toilet - Avoid crowds and people who are sick - Do not share food and avoid taking raw food Please proceed to the A & E department immediately if you experience signs of an infection such as fever with a temperature above 38°C, chills, and burning sensation when passing urine. Do not take Paracetamol (Panadol®) to relieve fever unless instructed by your doctor/ nurse.
Bruising or bleeding can occur as FOLFIRI regimen can reduce the number of platelets in your blood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prevent bleeding problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try not to bruise, cut or burn yourself - Clean your nose by blowing gently. Do not pick your nose - Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush as your gums may bleed more easily - Be aware that bleeding may take a longer time to stop Please proceed to the A & E department immediately if you experience signs of bleeding such as blood in urine or stools, or easy bruising.

Side Effect	Management
Mouth ulcers can occur on the tongue, the sides of the mouth or in the throat and this can lead to an infection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brush your teeth gently after eating and at bedtime with a soft toothbrush. Rinse and brush your dentures after eating and soak them in denture solution overnight. Rinsing your mouth regularly with an alcohol-free mouth gargle or salt water may help reduce chances of infection.
Early diarrhoea may occurs 24 hours after Irinotecan treatment and accompanied with watery eyes, stomach cramps and sweating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform nurses/ doctor immediately if it happens while chemotherapy is being given or proceed to A & E department if it happens when you get home.
Late diarrhoea may occurs one day to several days after an Irinotecan treatment. It starts with stools more loose or often than usual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Late diarrhea must be treated immediately with Loperamide tablets. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take two tablets at the first sign of loose or more frequent stools than usual - Then take one tablet every two hours until diarrhea has stopped for 12 hours - At night, you may take two tablets every four hours during the time you usually sleep - This dose is much higher than the package directions. It is very important that you take this higher dose to stop the diarrhea - Always keep a supply of Loperamide (e.g. have 48 tablets) on hand. Proceed to A & E department if diarrhoea does not improve 24 hours after starting Loperamide or lasts more than 36 hours. Make sure you drink at least two litres (8 cups) of fluids every day when you have diarrhoea. Avoid milk or dairy products and/or high fibre food whilst you are having diarrhoea.

Side Effect	Management
<p>Hand-foot syndrome where palms of hands and soles of your feet may tingle, become red, numb, painful, or swollen. Skin may also become dry or itchy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform your doctor if blisters, severe pain or ulcers affects your normal daily activities. Avoid tight-fitting shoes or rubbing pressure to hands and feet if this occurs. Applying moisturizer to hands and feet liberally often may help. Applying sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 30 may help.

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

Are There any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?

- It is important to inform your doctor if you intend to conceive or breastfeed while taking this medication.
- You must not become pregnant during treatment and must use an effective method of contraception. You should take appropriate contraceptive measures during and up to 6 months after cessation of treatment. If pregnancy occurs during your treatment, you must inform your doctor immediately.
- FOLFIRI regimen may have an anti-fertility effect, which could be irreversible. You should discuss with your doctor regarding fertility preservation prior to starting treatment.
- You should not breast-feed during treatment.

What Else can I do to Help My Condition?

- Exercise

Light exercise is recommended as it helps to improve mobility, balance and even emotional well-being. Do avoid strenuous exercise and rest when you are feeling tired.

- Stay positive

Understand your condition and take an active role in managing it. Do not be afraid to talk about it with your doctor/ pharmacist/ family members. Repressed feelings can be harmful to your immediate well-being and long-term health.

- Adequate hydration

Maintain adequate hydration with 2 to 3 litres (8 to 12 cups) of fluids per day unless informed by your doctor to restrict fluids. This will decrease your chances of being constipated and also prevent dehydration.

- Medical and dental treatment

If you need to go into hospital for any reason other than cancer, always inform the doctors and nurses that you are having chemotherapy. Talk to your cancer doctor if you think you need dental treatment. Always inform your dentist that you are having chemotherapy

If you have any problem with your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician.

