

PHARMACY

Drug Information

RCHOP Regimen (Rituximab, Cyclophosphamide, Doxorubicin, Vincristine, Prednisolone)



What is RCHOP Regimen?

- RCHOP is a chemotherapy regimen comprising of five drugs (Rituximab, Cyclophosphamide, Doxorubicin, Vincristine and oral Prednisolone), given for the treatment of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma.

How is RCHOP Administered / Taken?

- On the first day of each cycle, Rituximab, Cyclophosphamide, Doxorubicin and Vincristine will be given into your veins (intravenous). A five-day course of oral Prednisolone tablets will also be started.
- RCHOP is given as a 21-day cycle for up to 8 cycles.
- If you miss a dose of the Prednisolone, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, take only the usual dose. Do not double the dosage.

Can RCHOP be Administered / Taken With Other Medications?

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

What are the Important Side Effects of RCHOP?

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

- Infusion related reaction
 - These are usually mild or moderate, but rarely, they can be more severe. You may be given drugs before the infusion to reduce the chance of a reaction happening.
 - If you do have a reaction, this can usually be treated by slowing or stopping the drip until the reaction is over. Any future infusions will be given at a slower rate.

o Inform the nurses immediately during infusion of Rituximab, Cyclophosphamide, Doxorubicin or Vincristine if you experience the following:

- Flu-like symptoms, such as headache, feeling flushed, having a fever, chills or dizziness
- Red, warm and itchy bumps on the skin
- Swelling in the lips, tongue or throat
- Breathlessness, wheezing, a cough or sudden difficulty in breathing
- Chest tightness or chest pain

• Low blood pressure

Blood pressure of some patients may drop during the infusion of Rituximab and you may experience dizziness. If this happens, inform the nurse-in-charge. Your blood pressure will be checked regularly throughout the infusion. If you normally take medications to lower your blood pressure, please inform the doctor or nurses prior to starting the infusion.

• Drug leakage

Doxorubicin and Vincristine may leak out of the veins and damage the tissues around the vein. This is called extravasation. Inform the nurse immediately if you have any stinging, pain, redness or swelling around the vein. Extravasation is not common but if it happens it is important that it is managed quickly.

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

Side Effect	Management
Risk of infection can occur as RCHOP can reduce the number of white blood cells in your blood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce risk of infection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wash your hands after toileting. - Avoid crowds and people who are sick. - Avoid raw food. • Please proceed to the A&E department immediately if you experience signs of infection such as fever with a temperature of 38°C and above, chills and shivering. Avoid taking Paracetamol (Panadol®) to relieve fever. Be aware that taking Paracetamol may mask fever and hence delay treatment of infection.
Bruising or bleeding may occur as RCHOP can reduce the number of platelets in your blood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce risk of bleeding problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do not pick your nose. - Brush your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush. - Be aware that bleeding may take a longer time to stop. • Please proceed to the A&E department immediately if you experience any severe bleeding (e.g. passing a large amount of fresh blood in urine or stools, or passing black sticky stools) or significant bruising.
Nausea or vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take small, frequent meals. • Avoid smells that precipitate nausea. • Take medications for nausea or vomiting prescribed by your doctor. • Avoid tight-fitting clothes around the waist.

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.
Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constipation frequently occurs and may be severe. Maintain adequate hydration (2-3 litres) of fluids per day unless informed otherwise by your doctor. Your doctor may prescribe you stool softeners to prevent constipation. Inform your doctor immediately if you experience severe abdominal pain.
Stomach irritation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prednisolone may cause gastric irritation. Take Prednisolone after meals to reduce this side effect.
Raised blood sugar levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prednisolone may cause raised blood sugar levels. Blood sugar levels often return to baseline upon stopping Prednisolone.
Bladder inflammation resulting in discomfort when passing urine or blood in the urine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain adequate hydration with 2 to 3 litres (8 to 12 cups) of fluids per day unless informed by your doctor to restrict fluids.
Difficulty in passing urine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform your doctor immediately if you have decrease in urination or painful urination.
Numbness and tingling sensation in the hands or feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform your doctor if you have this symptom, trouble buttoning up shirts or if you are unable to pick up objects.

Side Effect	Management
Headache, jaw pain or muscle pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild pain can be relieved by taking Paracetamol (Panadol ®). Inform your doctor if pain is not controlled by Paracetamol. Avoid Paracetamol when you are having fever.
Fatigue or tiredness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not drive or operate machinery if you are feeling tired. Inform your doctor if fatigue is persistent or worsens.
Dizziness, seizures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform your doctor immediately if you experience mood changes, dizziness or seizures.
Hearing loss or hearing difficulty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform your doctor immediately if you experience hearing difficulty.
Hair Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear a wig or hat or use a gentle shampoo.
Harmless red or pinkish discolouration of the urine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is expected as it is the colour of Doxorubicin and will last for one to two days after chemotherapy.
Rarely, reduction in heart function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may require tests to check how well your heart is working before, during and sometimes, after treatment. If you experience pain or tightness in your chest, feel breathless or notice changes to your heartbeat at any time during or after treatment, please proceed to the A&E department immediately.
Risk of blood disorders/leukemia and secondary cancers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occurs very rarely. Please discuss with your physician if you have concerns.

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 with RCHOP and must use effective contraceptive measures during and up to 12 months after stopping treatment. If pregnancy occurs during your treatment, you must inform your doctor immediately.
- RCHOP 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. 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 getting constipation 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.

How do I Store Prednisolone?

- Prednisolone tablets should be stored in a cool, dry place away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

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

Please keep all medications out of reach of children.

You can also find useful information with regards to your medication on this website:

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support>

