

Peripheral Neuropathy

What you need to know and why:

One of the possible side effects of certain chemotherapy drugs is damage to the nerves in your body. This may result in a feeling of “pins and needles” or the feeling that your hands and/or feet are asleep. Other problems as a result of peripheral neuropathy may be constipation, jaw pain, hearing changes or ringing in the ears.

What you need to watch for:

- Feeling of pins and needles or numbness in your hands or your feet
- Difficulty picking up an object or buttoning your shirt or blouse
- Pain in your hands or feet
- Ringing in your ears
- Jaw pain
- Changes in your vision
- Constipation or other changes in your bowel or bladder function

What to do:

It is important to tell your doctor/nurse if you develop:

- A sensation of pins and needles or numbness in your hands and feet. This can interfere with your sensation for the feeling of hot and cold, i.e. picking up a hot cup of coffee or it can interfere with activities, i.e. stumbling when walking due to numbness in your feet or toes. Use care when trimming nails.
- Hearing difficulties, ringing in the ears or jaw pain.

It is important to prevent constipation if you take the drug Vincristine, Vinblastine or Vinorelbine:

- Drink eight glasses (1.5-2 litres) of fluid daily (water, juices, carbonated beverages).
- Eat high fibre diet (fruit, vegetables, beans, bran, prunes).
- Do moderate exercise as tolerated.
- Take a laxative as directed by your doctor/nurse.

If your bowels have not moved by the third day, Call the Oncology Clinic - Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: 905-682-6451.

Treatment:

Although it is not possible to prevent early nerve damage, it is possible to prevent it from worsening. It is important to tell the doctor or nurse if any of these symptoms occur.

Personal Notes/Reminders
