Paclitaxel and Bevacizumab

What is Paclitaxel (pak-li-TAX-el) and how does it work?
Paclitaxel is a chemotherapy medicine known as an “anti-microtubule inhibitor”. Another name for this medicine is Taxol. It is a natural medicine that comes from the bark of Pacific Yew trees. This medicine fights cancer by stopping fast growing cancer cells from dividing and making new cancer cells.

What is Bevacizumab (be-va-SIZ-yoo-mab) and how does it work?
Bevacizumab is a type of targeted cancer therapy called a “monoclonal antibody”. Another name for this medicine is Avastin. This medicine can be given alone or with other medicine to treat cancer. Bevacizumab works by cutting off the supply of blood and nutrients to cancer cells. This prevents the cells from dividing and making new cancer cells.

Why am I getting 2 treatment medicines for my cancer?
Both medicines work to stop fast growing cancer cells from dividing and making new cells, but they attack the cancer cells differently. Giving the 2 medicines together makes your treatment more effective.

What should I tell my doctor before starting treatment?
Talk to your doctor about the following:
  • If you have ever had chemotherapy or anti-cancer treatments and the names of the medicines you were given.
• If you have ever had heart, kidney, or liver problems.
• If you have ever had a bleeding disorder.
• If you have had a surgery or medical/dental procedure(s) in the last 6 months or plan to have surgery or medical/dental procedure(s) in the near future.
• If you are allergic to medicines that contain Cremophor EL.
• If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant. Your doctor will talk with you about birth control when you take these medicines.
• If you are breastfeeding.
• If you have been told that you need to start a new medicine.
• The medicines/pills you are taking, including:
  ▶ Medicines ordered by any of your doctors
  ▶ Herbs
  ▶ Vitamins
  ▶ Over-the-counter medicines

**How does my doctor decide my treatment dose?**

To determine your treatment dose, your doctor will review the following: your stage of cancer, your height, your weight, your medicines, how well your liver and kidneys work and any other health problems you have.

This treatment is given 1 day each week for 3 weeks in a row, followed by 1 week off. You will see your doctor or nurse practitioner 1 time each month during your treatment.

**Should I eat or drink before my treatment?**

It is best to eat a small meal and drink plenty of fluids before getting your treatment. If you have been told to limit fluids, check with your doctor about how much you can drink.
How will my treatment be given?
You will be given several medicines, 30 to 60 minutes before your treatment to prevent you from having an allergic reaction. **These medicines may affect your abilities. For your safety, you should have someone drive you home.**

Paclitaxel is given directly into your blood stream through a tube (IV) placed in your arm or chest. Paclitaxel comes in a bag with tubing attached. Your nurse will connect the tubing to a pump.

Bevacizumab is given directly into your blood stream through a tube (IV) placed in your arm or chest. Bevacizumab comes in a bag with tubing attached. Your nurse will connect the tubing to a pump. This treatment takes about 30 minutes.

Your entire visit, including your doctor’s appointment and your treatment will take between 3 to 6 hours.

What are the side effects of this treatment?
Every person responds differently to treatment. Some of the more common side effects of this treatment are:

- Numbness, tingling or pain in your hands or feet
- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Hair loss, including the hair on your head and body (this normally begins 10 to 14 days after your treatment)
- Mouth pain or open sores in your mouth
- Low white blood cell count (may increase your risk for infection)
- Low hemoglobin (may cause you to have less energy and become tired more easily)
- Low platelet count (may cause you to bleed more easily or longer than normal and have more bruising)
- Muscle or joint aches and pain
- Allergic reaction to the medicine
- Changes in your nails or skin
- Rash

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- Nosebleeds
- Headaches
- Pain
- Increase in blood pressure
- Dizziness
- Changes in your voice or hoarse voice
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Decreased appetite
- Slow healing from cuts and wounds
- Protein in your urine

**When should I call my doctor?**

You should call your doctor right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher

  **A fever can be life threatening if not treated. Your doctor may ask you to go to the hospital.**

- Chills, sore throat, cough or a wound that does not get better
- Numbness, tingling or pain that keeps you from doing simple tasks, such as walking, buttoning your shirt or holding a cup
- Unusual bleeding, bruising or opening of a wound or surgery scar
- Open sores in your mouth
- Nausea that prevents you from eating or drinking
- Trouble swallowing, coughing, or choking while eating
- Skin redness or blisters at the place where your chemotherapy was given
- Bleeding or bruising, including bloody or black stools or blood in your urine
- Diarrhea (4 or more loose stools in 24 hours)
• Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
• Yellowing of your skin or eyes
• Sudden confusion, changes in vision, loss of movement, trouble speaking, chest pain, sudden or severe headaches, loss of consciousness or seizures

Is there anything else I should know about this treatment?

• Some patients may have an allergic reaction while this treatment is being given. To prevent this, you will be given a medicine before your treatment. If an allergic reaction does happen, your nurse will give you medicine to help manage the reaction and take extra precautions during your next treatment.

• Cancer treatments may make it harder for your body to fight infections. Wash your hands often and stay away from people who are sick.

• This treatment requires special precautions to prevent the medicines from coming into contact (through blood, urine, bowel movements, vomit and vaginal or seminal fluids) with others. Your nurse will give you guidelines to follow for 48 hours after your treatment.

• You may need to stop this treatment several weeks before and after you have a surgery or medical/dental procedure(s) due to an increased risk of bleeding or slow wound healing.

• This treatment may increase your risk of blood clots.

• Cancer treatments can change how your body reacts to vaccines. Talk to your doctor before getting any vaccines.

• It is important to keep hydrated during treatment. Unless told otherwise by your doctor, drink 8 to 10 cups of non-caffeinated fluid each day.

• This treatment may cause women to stop having menstrual cycles. Depending on your age, your menstrual cycles may or may not return.

• This treatment may affect your ability to have children. It may be hard to get pregnant even after your treatment has ended. Talk to your doctor before you start treatment if you are planning to have children in the future.
For more information about cancer, cancer treatment, side effects or how to take care of yourself during treatment, or ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

You may also find it helpful to watch The James Patient Education videos at http://cancer.osu.edu/patientedvideos to help you learn tips for managing treatment side effects.