



# Oral chlorambucil for children and young people

An information guide for patients, parents and carers

The purpose of this guide is to give information on the use of chlorambucil in children and young people with cancer.

Please read this guide carefully alongside any patient information provided by the manufacturer. We have written this guide to give you more information about the use of this medicine in children and young people. Keep it somewhere safe so you can read it again.

## What is chlorambucil?

Chlorambucil is a chemotherapy medicine used in the treatment of certain types of cancers.

## What preparations of chlorambucil are available?

Chlorambucil is available as 2mg tablets. A liquid medication may be available at some hospitals.

## Where can I get chlorambucil from?

You must only get chlorambucil from your treating hospital. Please remember to bring all medication with you at each hospital visit.

## How is chlorambucil given?

Chlorambucil is given by mouth, once a day. Chlorambucil must not be given with food, it is best given at least one hour before food or two hours after food. Instructions will be on the label or on the patient dosing information chart. The tablets should be swallowed whole with plenty of water or juice. Do not break, crush or chew the tablets.

If nasogastric (NG) feeds are being given, then the administration of lomustine can be timed around the feeds. Your hospital or shared care centre will be able to advise you on this.

## Are there any possible side effects?

It is important to remember that everyone reacts differently to chemotherapy. Some patients will have very few side effects whilst others will have more. The side effects listed below will not affect everyone who is given chlorambucil and may be different if more than one chemotherapy drug is given.

## What are the common side effects?

### Reduced bone marrow function

Blood counts will be checked regularly to see how the bone marrow is working. A low neutrophil count can increase your/your child's risk of infection. A low haemoglobin count indicates anaemia which may cause unusual tiredness and a low platelet count may cause bruising or bleeding.

Please contact your hospital team if there are any signs of infection, especially a high temperature or unusual tiredness, bruising or bleeding.

### **Nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting (being sick)**

Anti-sickness medicines can be given to reduce or prevent these symptoms. Please contact your hospital team if sickness is not controlled.

### **Diarrhoea**

If diarrhoea is severe or continuous, contact your hospital team for advice.

## **What are the less common side effects?**

### **Skin rashes**

Chlorambucil can cause a rash which may be itchy. If a rash appears or skin blisters or peels, contact your hospital team for advice.

### **Sensitivity of the skin to sunlight**

The skin may burn more easily than usual while taking chlorambucil. Exposure to sunlight and other forms of ultraviolet light should be avoided. Always use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 50 or higher, and wear a hat when out in the sun.

### **Mouth ulcers**

If the mouth becomes sore or ulcers develop, contact your hospital team for advice. Always follow their advice on how to take good care of the mouth before and during treatment.

### **Effects on the lungs**

In some cases, chlorambucil may cause changes to the lungs and this will be monitored carefully throughout treatment. Extra care is taken for anyone with reduced lung function and those who have had lung or chest radiotherapy. If a cough or shortness of breath develops, please contact your hospital team.

### **Other cancers**

If chlorambucil is given for a long time, there is a very small risk of developing a another cancer after many years. If you would like more information, please discuss this with your consultant.

## **Is there anything else I should know about or do?**

Contact your treating hospital if:

- a dose of chlorambucil is forgotten
- vomiting occurs after taking the dose
- too much chlorambucil is given

## **Which tests/investigations may take place before, during or after treatment with chlorambucil?**

### **Full blood count**

A full blood count will be done regularly at your hospital, shared care centre or by your community team. The dose of chlorambucil may need to be adjusted according to the result. The new dose will be recorded on the label or on the patient dosing information chart.

### **Lung function tests**

Tests to show how the lungs are working will be done before and during treatment.

## **Does chlorambucil interact with any other medicines?**

Some medicines can affect how well chlorambucil works. Always tell the medical team about any other medication that is being taken. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines. This includes supplements and herbal or complementary medicines.

## **How should the medicine be handled and stored?**

- always handle medicines with care
- keep in a safe place out of reach and sight of children
- store tablets in a fridge
- keep out of direct sunlight
- handle as little as possible and always wear gloves
- if you are pregnant or think you could be pregnant, discuss handling instructions with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist

Any chlorambucil that has not been given, or is out of date, must be returned your treating hospital. **Do not throw away at home.**

**Please read the CCLG factsheet – ‘Safe handling of chemotherapy medicines’**

## Pregnancy

If you are sexually active while taking anti-cancer medicines or drugs, it is important to use contraception such as condoms, the pill or coil to avoid pregnancy. You may need to take a pregnancy test to confirm you are not pregnant before taking this medicine. Contraception should continue for a while after treatment finishes. Your team will advise how long you should continue using contraception.

## Fertility

Depending on the type, dose and combination of medicines given during your treatment, it is possible that fertility may be affected. For girls, this means that it may be harder for them to become pregnant in the future. For boys, this may mean that their sperm is less fertile which can affect their chance of having children in the future. If you would like more information about this, please discuss with your medical team.

**If you have any questions about chlorambucil, please contact your treating hospital. This guide only gives general information.**

**Always discuss individual treatment with your medical team. Do not rely on this guide alone for information about treatment.**

## i USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

**Children’s Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG)** publishes a variety of free resources to order or download.  
[www.cclg.org.uk](http://www.cclg.org.uk)

**Young Lives vs Cancer** offers practical support to children and young people with cancer and to their families.  
[www.younglivesvscancer.org.uk](http://www.younglivesvscancer.org.uk)

**Macmillan Cancer Support** offers support and advice to those affected by cancer.  
[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

**EMC (Electronic Medicines Compendium)** offers up-to-date, approved and regulated information for licensed medicines.  
[www.medicines.org.uk](http://www.medicines.org.uk)



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Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group (CCLG) is a leading national charity and expert voice for all childhood cancers.

Each week in the UK and Ireland, more than 30 children are diagnosed with cancer. Our network of dedicated professional members work together in treatment, care and research to help shape a future where all children with cancer survive and live happy, healthy and independent lives.

We fund and support innovative world-class research and collaborate, both nationally and internationally, to drive forward improvements in childhood cancer. Our award-winning information resources help lessen the anxiety, stress and loneliness commonly felt by families, giving support throughout the cancer journey.

Publication of this factsheet was funded by CCLG. If you would like to help, text 'CCLG' to 70085 to donate £3. You may be charged for one text message at your network's standard or charity rate. CCLG (registered charity numbers 1182637 and SC049948) will receive 100% of your donation.

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If you have any comments on this factsheet, please contact us at [publications@cclg.org.uk](mailto:publications@cclg.org.uk) CCLG publications on a variety of topics related to children's cancer are available to order or download free of charge from our website.



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