The Children & Young People's Cancer Association

Vinblastine for children and young people

An information guide for parents, carers and young adult patients

The purpose of this guide is to give information about the use of vinblastine to parents, carers and young people undergoing treatment for 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 vinblastine?

Vinblastine is a chemotherapy medicine used to treat many different types of cancers and some other types of illnesses that are not cancer. It may be given alone or with other chemotherapy medicines as part of a treatment plan.

How is vinblastine given?

Vinblastine is given directly into a vein. This is called an 'intravenous' or 'IV' infusion. It is usually given through a central or PICC line, or implantable port. Your medical team will talk to you about which is most appropriate. Vinblastine is given by a slow injection or short infusion.

Are there any side effects?

It is important to remember that everyone reacts differently to chemotherapy. Some will have very few side effects whilst others will have more. The side effects listed below will not affect everyone who is given vinblastine 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 means there is a greater risk of infection. A low haemoglobin count indicates anaemia, which can cause more tiredness than usual. A low platelet count may cause bruising or bleeding.

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

Constipation and tummy pain

Vinblastine can cause constipation, which means not being able to poo as often as normal. This can become painful. Drinking lots of fluids and eating fruit, vegetables and high-fibre foods can help. Medicines, called laxatives, may be needed. These help soften poo and stimulate the bowel, which will help.

Numbness, tingling, aches and pains (peripheral neuropathy)

Vinblastine may affect the nervous system. This can cause changes to sensations such as numbness, tingling, aches, and pains. This is called 'peripheral neuropathy'. It may be harder to pick feet up and walking may be altered. Please tell your medical team if these effects happen.

If the pain or numbness is severe, a type of pain relief medication may be given to help. Your medical team may also suggest physiotherapy.

Jaw pain or difficulty in swallowing

This can happen because vinblastine can affect a nerve running through the face. This is temporary and will wear off after the treatment is finished. Please tell your medical team if this problem happens.

Hair loss

Some or all hair may fall out, including eyebrows and eyelashes. This is temporary and hair will grow back after treatment finishes.

Effects on the liver

Vinblastine can cause some changes to how the liver works. This should return to normal when the treatment finishes. Regular blood tests will be taken to check liver function (called LFTs - liver function tests).

Sometimes the dose of vinblastine may be altered depending on the LFT result. Your doctor will explain if this is needed.

Pain or discomfort when passing urine (wee)

If there is pain when weeing or needing to wee happens more or less often than usual, tell your medical team immediately.

Loss of appetite

Vinblastine can affect appetite. It is normal to not feel like eating much while having vinblastine, so try not to worry. If appetite does not come back after a few days, talk to your team. They will be able to give advice and may suggest some food or drink supplements.

What are the less common side effects?

Nausea (feeling sick) and vomiting (being sick

Vinblastine does not normally cause nausea and vomiting, but anti-sickness medicines can be given with vinblastine if needed to reduce or prevent these symptoms.

If sickness or feeling sick continues, talk to your team as they may be able to change the anti-sickness medicines. If sickness is not controlled after going home, contact your team for further advice.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea means passing more poo than is normal for you, or having watery or loose poo. Stomach cramps can be experienced alongside diarrhoea. This is usually mild. If diarrhoea is severe or continuous, contact your team for advice.

Headaches

If headaches develop, contact your medical team for advice.

Important to watch for:

Vinblastine is a medicine that causes damage to body tissue if it leaks out of a blood vessel and gets into tissues around the area. This is known as ‘extravasation’. Extravasation is not common but if it does happen it is important to treat it quickly.

If there is any pain, stinging, or a burning sensation around the neck or chest while vinblastine is being given, tell your medical team immediately.

Which tests/investigations may be needed?

Vinblastine is often given with other chemotherapy medicines, so a full blood count and blood tests for liver and kidney function are often taken before each treatment with vinblastine. Your medical team will explain if any blood tests are necessary.

Does vinblastine interact with any other medicines?

Some medicines can affect how well vinblastine works, so always tell your doctor about any other medication being taken. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines. This includes supplements, herbal and complementary medicines.

Vinblastine interacts with a group of medicines called ‘azoles’. Common examples are fluconazole, voriconazole and posaconazole. If these medicines are taken together they can increase the side effects of vinblastine. Tell your medical team if any of these medicines are being taken and they will be able to advise.

Pregnancy

If a person is 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. A pregnancy test may be needed before taking this medicine. Contraception should continue for a while after treatment finishes. Your team will advise how long contraception should continue for.

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 vinblastine, 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.

Useful information

CCLG: The Children & Young People's Cancer Association publishes a variety of free resources to order or download at **www.cclg.org.uk/publications**

Scan to order or download this factsheet or any other CCLG publications FREE of charge.

Young Lives vs Cancer provides practical support and advice for children and young people affected by cancer and their families.
www.younglivesvscancer.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support offers support and advice to those affected by cancer.
www.macmillan.org.uk

EMC (Electronic Medicines Compendium) offers up to date, approved and regulated information for licensed medicines.
www.medicines.org.uk

The Children & Young People's Cancer Association

Century House, 24 De Montfort Street
Leicester LE1 7GB
0333 050 7654
info@cclg.org.uk | www.cclg.org.uk

@cclguk

This edition: November 2025
Next review date: November 2028

Trusted Information Creator
Patient Information Forum

This factsheet was written by Tasneem Khalid, Senior Oncology Pharmacist, The Christie, Manchester and reviewed by Rachel Greer, Paediatric Oncology Pharmacist, Leeds Children's Hospital and the Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG) Paediatric Oncology Pharmacists Steering Committee on behalf of the CCLG Information Advisory Group, comprising parents, survivors and multiprofessional experts in the field of children and young people's cancer.

We are CCLG: The Children & Young People's Cancer Association, a charity dedicated to creating a brighter future for children and young people with cancer. Powered by expertise, we unite the children and young people's cancer community, driving collective action and progress.

We fund and lead pioneering research, provide trusted information and guidance for children and young people with cancer and their families, and bring together professionals to improve treatment, care and outcomes.

Our expert information helps children and young people, and everyone supporting them, to navigate the challenges of cancer and its impact, offering reassurance and clarity when it's needed most.

We make every effort to ensure that this information is accurate and up to date at the time of printing. Information in this publication should be used to supplement appropriate professional or other advice specific to your circumstances.

Our work is funded by donations. If you would like to help, visit **www.cclg.org.uk/donate** or text '**CCLG**' to **70085** to donate **£3.** You may be charged for one text message at your network's standard or charity rate. CCLG will receive 100% of your donation.

We want our information resources to be relevant and useful. Tell us what you think by scanning this code to complete a short survey or contact us at publications@cclg.org.uk