

# Docetaxel (Taxotere®)

**Pronounced:** DOE-se-TAX-el

**Classification:** Antineoplastic Agent

## About Docetaxel

Docetaxel works by disrupting the microtubular network in cells, which is essential for cell division and other normal cellular functions. Docetaxel interferes with the function of microtubules, resulting in inactive microtubule bundles, causing cells to die.

## How to Take Docetaxel

Docetaxel is given by intravenous (IV, into a vein) infusion, over an hour. The dosage and schedule is determined by the person's size and type of cancer. It can be given alone or with other drugs. You will be given a corticosteroid prior to the infusion to prevent severe fluid retention and allergic reactions. This can be given in a pill form or by IV, which will be determined by your healthcare provider.

This medication contains alcohol and may cause intoxication. You should not drive after the infusion until you know how it will affect you.

## Possible Side Effects of Docetaxel

There are a number of things you can do to manage the side effects of docetaxel. Talk to your doctor or nurse about these recommendations. They can help you decide what will work best for you. These are some of the most common side effects:

### ***Allergic Reactions***

Allergic reactions are possible with this medication. Signs of a reaction can include: shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chest pain, rash, flushing, hives or itching or a decrease in blood pressure. If you notice any changes in how you feel during the infusion, let your nurse know immediately. The infusion will be slowed or stopped if this occurs.

### ***Low White Blood Cell Count (Leukopenia or Neutropenia)***

White blood cells (WBC) are important for fighting infection. While receiving treatment,

your [WBC count can drop](#), putting you at a higher risk of getting an infection. You should let your doctor or nurse know right away if you have a fever (temperature greater than 100.4), sore throat or cold, shortness of breath, cough, burning with urination, or a sore that doesn't heal.

Tips to preventing infection:

- [Washing hands](#), both yours and your visitors, is the best way to prevent the spread of infection.
- Avoid large crowds and people who are sick (i.e.: those who have a cold, fever or cough or live with someone with these symptoms).
- When working in your yard, wear protective clothing including long pants and gloves.
- Do not handle pet waste.
- Keep all cuts or scratches clean.
- Shower or bath daily and perform frequent [mouth care](#).
- Do not cut cuticles or ingrown nails. You may wear nail polish, but not fake nails.
- Ask your doctor or nurse before scheduling dental appointments or procedures.
- Ask your doctor or nurse before you, or someone you live with, has any vaccinations.

### ***Low Red Blood Cell Count (Anemia)***

Your red blood cells are responsible for carrying oxygen to the tissues in your body. When the [red cell count is low](#), you may feel tired or weak. You should let your doctor or nurse know if you experience any shortness of breath, difficulty breathing or pain in your chest. If the count gets too low, you may receive a blood transfusion.

### ***Low Platelet Count (Thrombocytopenia)***

Platelets help your blood clot, so when the [count is low](#) you are at a higher risk of bleeding. Let your doctor or nurse know if you have any excess bruising or bleeding, including nose bleeds, bleeding gums or blood in your urine or stool. If the platelet count becomes too low, you may receive a transfusion of platelets.

- Do not use a razor (an electric razor is fine).
- Avoid contact sports and activities that can result in injury or bleeding.
- Do not take aspirin (salicylic acid), non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) such as Motrin®, Aleve®, Advil®, etc. as these can all increase the risk of bleeding. Unless your healthcare team tells you otherwise, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- Do not floss or use toothpicks and use a soft-bristle toothbrush to brush your teeth.

### ***Fluid Retention***

Docetaxel can cause your body to hold too much fluid, which can be a serious side effect. Medications will be given before each treatment to decrease the risk of this side effect.



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Call your healthcare provider if you do not urinate for more than 12 hours, experience shortness of breath, have an unexpected weight gain, or develop swelling in your hands, feet, ankles or legs.

### ***Nausea and/or Vomiting***

Talk to your doctor or nurse so they can prescribe medications to help you manage [nausea and vomiting](#). In addition, dietary changes may help. Avoid things that may worsen the symptoms, such as heavy or greasy/fatty, spicy or acidic foods (lemons, tomatoes, oranges). Try antacids, (e.g. milk of magnesia, calcium tablets such as Tums), saltines, or ginger ale to lessen symptoms.

Call your doctor or nurse if you are unable to keep fluids down for more than 12 hours or if you feel lightheaded or dizzy at any time.

### ***Diarrhea***

Your oncology team can recommend medications to relieve [diarrhea](#). Also, try eating [low-fiber](#), bland foods, such as white rice and boiled or baked chicken. Avoid raw fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads, cereals and seeds. Soluble fiber is found in some foods and absorbs fluid, which can help relieve diarrhea. Foods high in soluble fiber include: applesauce, bananas (ripe), canned fruit, orange sections, boiled potatoes, white rice, products made with white flour, oatmeal, cream of rice, cream of wheat, and farina. Drink 8-10 glasses of non-alcoholic, un-caffeinated fluid a day to prevent dehydration.

### ***Fatigue***

[Fatigue](#) is very common during cancer treatment and is an overwhelming feeling of exhaustion that is not usually relieved by rest. While on cancer treatment, and for a period after, you may need to adjust your schedule to manage fatigue. Plan times to rest during the day and conserve energy for more important activities. Exercise can help combat fatigue; a simple daily walk with a friend can help. Talk to your healthcare team for helpful tips on dealing with this side effect.

### ***Mouth Ulcers (Sores)***

Certain cancer treatments can cause [sores or soreness in your mouth](#) and/or throat. Notify your doctor or nurse if your mouth, tongue, inside of your cheek or throat becomes white, ulcerated or painful. Performing [regular mouth care](#) can help prevent or manage mouth sores. If mouth sores become painful, your doctor or nurse can recommend a pain reliever.

- Brush with a soft-bristle toothbrush or cotton swab twice a day.
- Avoid mouthwashes that contain alcohol. A baking soda and/or salt warm water mouth rinse (2 level teaspoons of baking soda or 1 level teaspoon salt in an eight



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- ounce glass of warm water) is recommended 4 times daily.
- If your mouth becomes dry, eat moist foods, drink plenty of fluids (6-8 glasses), and suck on sugarless hard candy.
  - Avoid smoking and chewing tobacco, drinking alcoholic beverages and citrus juices.

### ***Loss or Thinning of Scalp and Body Hair (Alopecia)***

Your hair may become **thin, brittle, or may fall out**. This typically begins two to three weeks after treatment starts. This hair loss can be all body hair, including pubic, underarm, legs/arms, eyelashes, and nose hairs. The use of scarves, wigs, hats and hairpieces may help. Hair generally starts to regrow soon after treatment is completed. Remember your hair helps keep you warm in cold weather, so a hat is particularly important in cold weather or to protect you from the sun.

### ***Peripheral Neuropathy (Numbness or Tingling in the Hands and/or Feet)***

**Peripheral neuropathy** is a toxicity that affects the nerves. It causes a numbness or tingling feeling in the hands and feet, often in the pattern of a stocking or glove. This can get progressively worse with additional doses of the medication. In some people, the symptoms slowly resolve after the medication is stopped, but for some it never goes away completely. You should let your healthcare provider know if you experience numbness or tingling in the hands and feet, as they may need to adjust the doses of your medication.

### ***Muscle or Joint Pain/Aches and Headache***

Your doctor or nurse can recommend medication and other strategies to relieve pain.

### ***Decrease in Appetite***

**Nutrition** is an important part of your care. Cancer treatment can affect your appetite and, in some cases, the side effects of treatment can make eating difficult. Ask your nurse about nutritional counseling services at your treatment center to help with food choices.

- Try to eat five or six small meals or snacks throughout the day, instead of 3 larger meals.
- If you are not eating enough, nutritional supplements may help.
- You may experience a metallic taste or find that food has no taste at all. You may dislike foods or beverages that you liked before receiving cancer treatment. These symptoms can last for several months or longer after treatment ends.
- Avoid any food that you think smells or tastes bad. If red meat is a problem, eat chicken, turkey, eggs, dairy products and fish without a strong smell. Sometimes cold food has less of an odor.
- Add extra flavor to meat or fish by marinating it in sweet juices, sweet and sour sauce or dressings. Use seasonings like basil, oregano or rosemary to add flavor. Bacon, ham and onion can add flavor to vegetables.



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## ***Nail and Skin Changes***

Your fingernails/toenails may become dark, brittle or fall off. You may notice dry skin or changes in the color or tone of your skin. Your skin will be more sensitive to the sun, which can result in severe sunburn or rash. Sun sensitivity can last even after chemotherapy is completed. Avoid the sun between 10-2pm, when it is strongest. Wear sunscreen (at least SPF 15) everyday, wear sunglasses and long sleeves/pants to protect your skin. Keep your fingernails and toenails clean and dry. You may use nail polish, but do not wear fake nails. If any nails fall off, clean the nail bed well with soap and water and cover with a bandaid.

## ***Skin Reactions***

This medication can cause a skin reaction that progresses from redness with swelling to peeling skin. Be sure to inform your provider of any skin changes you develop as skin reactions can become serious.

## ***Radiation Recall***

Radiation recall is when the administration of a medication causes a skin reaction that looks like a sunburn (redness, swelling, soreness, peeling skin) in areas where radiation was previously given. Notify your oncology team if you notice this side effect. Treatment can include topical steroid ointments and a delay in your next chemotherapy dose.

## ***Vision Problems***

Docetaxel can cause eye problems that cause blurred vision or loss of vision. Report any vision changes to your healthcare team immediately.

## ***Reproductive Concerns***

Exposure of an unborn child to this medication could cause birth defects, so you should not become pregnant or father a child while on this medication. Effective birth control is necessary during treatment. Even if your menstrual cycle stops or you believe you are not producing sperm, you could still be fertile and conceive. You should consult with your healthcare team before breastfeeding while receiving this medication.

# **Carboplatin (Paraplatin®)**

**Pronounced:** car-boe-PLATT-in

**Classification:** Platinum Chemotherapies



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## About Carboplatin

Carboplatin is a heavy metal compound that inhibits synthesis of RNA, DNA, and protein in cells. All of these compounds are vital for cells to divide and grow. By preventing them from dividing, the medication can stop the cancer from growing.

## How to Take Carboplatin

Carboplatin is given by intravenous (IV, into a vein) injection. The schedule and dosage is based on the person's size and the cancer type being treated. It can be given alone, or with other drugs.

Carboplatin can interact with certain medications including some antibiotics, diuretics and blood thinners. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about all medications and supplements you take.

You or anyone you live with should avoid having live (oral polio, measles, rotovirus, yellow fever) or live-attenuated vaccines while receiving this medication.

## Possible Side Effects

There are a number of things you can do to manage the side effects of carboplatin. Talk to your doctor or nurse about these recommendations. They can help you decide what will work best for you. These are some of the most common side effects:

### ***Nausea and/or Vomiting***

Talk to your doctor or nurse so they can prescribe medications to help you manage [nausea and vomiting](#). In addition, dietary changes may help. Avoid things that may worsen the symptoms, such as heavy or greasy/fatty, spicy or acidic foods (lemons, tomatoes, oranges). Try antacids, (e.g. milk of magnesia, calcium tablets such as Tums), saltines, or ginger ale to lessen symptoms.

Call your doctor or nurse if you are unable to keep fluids down for more than 12 hours or if you feel lightheaded or dizzy at any time.

### ***Low White Blood Cell Count (Leukopenia or Neutropenia)***

White blood cells (WBC) are important for fighting infection. While receiving treatment, your [WBC count can drop](#), putting you at a higher risk of getting an infection. You should let your doctor or nurse know right away if you have a fever (temperature greater than 100.4), sore throat or cold, shortness of breath, cough, burning with urination, or a sore that doesn't heal.

Tips to preventing infection:

- [Washing hands](#), both yours and your visitors, is the best way to prevent the spread



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of infection.

- Avoid large crowds and people who are sick (i.e.: those who have a cold, fever or cough or live with someone with these symptoms).
- When working in your yard, wear protective clothing including long pants and gloves.
- Do not handle pet waste.
- Keep all cuts or scratches clean.
- Shower or bath daily and perform frequent [mouth care](#).
- Do not cut cuticles or ingrown nails. You may wear nail polish, but not fake nails.
- Ask your doctor or nurse before scheduling dental appointments or procedures.
- Ask your doctor or nurse before you, or someone you live with, has any vaccinations.

### ***Low Red Blood Cell Count (Anemia)***

Your red blood cells are responsible for carrying oxygen to the tissues in your body. When the [red cell count is low](#), you may feel tired or weak. You should let your doctor or nurse know if you experience any shortness of breath, difficulty breathing or pain in your chest. If the count gets too low, you may receive a blood transfusion.

### ***Low Platelet Count (Thrombocytopenia)***

Platelets help your blood clot, so when the [count is low](#) you are at a higher risk of bleeding. Let your doctor or nurse know if you have any excess bruising or bleeding, including nose bleeds, bleeding gums or blood in your urine or stool. If the platelet count becomes too low, you may receive a transfusion of platelets.

- Do not use a razor (an electric razor is fine).
- Avoid contact sports and activities that can result in injury or bleeding.
- Do not take aspirin (salicylic acid), non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) such as Motrin®, Aleve®, Advil®, etc. as these can all increase the risk of bleeding. Unless your healthcare team tells you otherwise, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol).
- Do not floss or use toothpicks and use a soft-bristle toothbrush to brush your teeth.

### ***Decrease in Appetite***

[Nutrition](#) is an important part of your care. Cancer treatment can affect your appetite and, in some cases, the side effects of treatment can make eating difficult. Ask your nurse about nutritional counseling services at your treatment center to help with food choices.

- Try to eat five or six small meals or snacks throughout the day, instead of 3 larger meals.
- If you are not eating enough, nutritional supplements may help.
- You may experience a metallic taste or find that food has no taste at all. You may dislike foods or beverages that you liked before receiving cancer treatment. These symptoms can last for several months or longer after treatment ends.



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- Avoid any food that you think smells or tastes bad. If red meat is a problem, eat chicken, turkey, eggs, dairy products and fish without a strong smell. Sometimes cold food has less of an odor.

### **Allergic Reactions**

In some cases, patients can have an allergic reaction to this medication. Signs of a reaction can include: rash, itching, hives, flushing, and/or shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. If you notice any changes in how you feel during the infusion, let your nurse know immediately. The infusion will be slowed or stopped if this occurs. Depending on the severity of your reaction, you may still be able to receive the medication with a pre-medication to prevent a reaction, or if the medication is given at a slower rate.

### **Fatigue**

**Fatigue** is very common during cancer treatment and is an overwhelming feeling of exhaustion that is not usually relieved by rest. While on cancer treatment, and for a period after, you may need to adjust your schedule to manage fatigue. Plan times to rest during the day and conserve energy for more important activities. Exercise can help combat fatigue; a simple daily walk with a friend can help. Talk to your healthcare team for helpful tips on dealing with this side effect.

### **Loss or Thinning of Scalp and Body Hair (Alopecia)**

Your hair may become **thin, brittle, or may fall out**. This typically begins two to three weeks after treatment starts. This hair loss can be all body hair, including pubic, underarm, legs/arms, eyelashes, and nose hairs. The use of scarves, wigs, hats and hairpieces may help. Hair generally starts to regrow soon after treatment is completed. Remember your hair helps keep you warm in cold weather, so a hat is particularly important in cold weather or to protect you from the sun.

### **Peripheral Neuropathy (Numbness or Tingling in the Hands and/or Feet)**

**Peripheral neuropathy** is a toxicity that affects the nerves. It causes a numbness or tingling feeling in the hands and feet, often in the pattern of a stocking or glove. This can get progressively worse with additional doses of the medication. In some people, the symptoms slowly resolve after the medication is stopped, but for some it never goes away completely. You should let your healthcare provider know if you experience numbness or tingling in the hands and feet, as they may need to adjust the doses of your medication.

### **Mouth Sores**

Certain cancer treatments can cause **sores or soreness in your mouth** and/or throat. Notify your doctor or nurse if your mouth, tongue, inside of your cheek or throat becomes white, ulcerated or painful. Performing **regular mouth care** can help prevent or manage



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mouth sores. If mouth sores become painful, your doctor or nurse can recommend a pain reliever.

- Brush with a soft-bristle toothbrush or cotton swab twice a day.
- Avoid mouthwashes that contain alcohol. A baking soda and/or salt warm water mouth rinse (2 level teaspoons of baking soda or 1 level teaspoon salt in an eight ounce glass of warm water) is recommended 4 times daily.
- If your mouth becomes dry, eat moist foods, drink plenty of fluids (6-8 glasses), and suck on sugarless hard candy.
- Avoid smoking and chewing tobacco, drinking alcoholic beverages and citrus juices.

### ***Diarrhea***

Your oncology team can recommend medications to relieve [diarrhea](#). Also, try eating [low-fiber](#), bland foods, such as white rice and boiled or baked chicken. Avoid raw fruits, vegetables, whole grain breads, cereals and seeds. Soluble fiber is found in some foods and absorbs fluid, which can help relieve diarrhea. Foods high in soluble fiber include: applesauce, bananas (ripe), canned fruit, orange sections, boiled potatoes, white rice, products made with white flour, oatmeal, cream of rice, cream of wheat, and farina. Drink 8-10 glasses of non-alcoholic, un-caffeinated fluid a day to prevent dehydration.

### ***Liver Toxicity***

This medication can cause liver toxicity, which your doctor may monitor for using blood tests called liver function tests. If you develop elevations in your liver function tests, your healthcare provider may need to lower your dose or stop the medication. Notify your healthcare provider if you notice yellowing of the skin or eyes, your urine appears dark or brown or pain in your abdomen, as these can be signs of liver toxicity.

### ***Nail Changes***

Your fingernails/toenails may become dark, brittle or fall off. They may develop ridges or markings on them. Keep your fingernails and toenails clean and dry. You may use nail polish, but do not wear fake nails. If any nails fall off, clean the nail bed well with soap and water and cover with a bandaid.

### ***Secondary Malignancies***

There is a very low risk of developing another type of cancer due to treatment with this medication, which can occur many years after treatment.

### ***Electrolyte Changes***

Carboplatin can cause changes in the levels of certain electrolytes in your blood, including sodium, potassium, calcium and magnesium. Your healthcare team will monitor your electrolyte levels throughout treatment.



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## ***Kidney Problems***

Carboplatin can impact your kidney function. Your healthcare team will monitor your kidney function throughout treatment. Intravenous fluids are given with the chemotherapy to flush your kidneys and increase your urine output. Try to drink at least 6-8 glasses of uncaffeinated fluids a day. Call your doctor or nurse if you do not urinate for more than 12 hours.

## ***Other Side Effects***

In rare cases, this medication can cause temporary changes to hearing and vision. Contact your care team if you notice ringing in your ears, decrease in hearing, or changes in your vision.

## ***Reproductive Concerns***

Exposure of an unborn child to this medication could cause birth defects, so you should not become pregnant or father a child while on this medication. Effective birth control is necessary during treatment. Even if your menstrual cycle stops or you believe you are not producing sperm, you could still be fertile and conceive. You should consult with your healthcare team before breastfeeding while receiving this medication.



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