Irinotecan Liposome (Onivyde®)

Pronounced: EYE-ri-noe-TEE-kan Li-po-some

Classification: Topoisomerase Inhibitor

About Irinotecan Liposome (Onivyde®)

Irinotecan Liposome is thought to work by blocking the action of an enzyme in cells called topoisomerase I. Topoisomerase drugs work by blocking the action of an enzyme in cells called topoisomerase, which is necessary for cell replication and tumor growth. Cells need this enzyme to keep their DNA in the proper shape when they are dividing. Blocking this enzyme leads to breaks in the DNA, which leads to cancer cell death.

How to Take Irinotecan Liposome

Irinotecan Liposome is administered intravenously (IV, directly into a vein). The dose is based on the patient’s weight. Patients will receive pre-medication with a corticosteroid, an anti-emetic (anti-nausea) medication, and possibly medication like atropine to prevent diarrhea. This medication is not given by itself but in combination with other chemotherapy medications.

The blood levels of this medication can be affected by certain foods and medications, so they should be avoided for 1-2 weeks before treatment. These include: grapefruit, grapefruit juice, carbamazepine, ketoconazole, rifampin, phenytoin, phenobarbital, and St. John’s wort, among others. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about all medications and supplements you take.

Possible Side Effects of Irinotecan Liposome

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

**Diarrhea**

Diarrhea is a common side effect of irinotecan liposome and can be very dangerous because it can lead to serious dehydration. Diarrhea can be defined as an increase in the number of bowel movements you have in a day. Your healthcare team may administer a medication in the clinic if you develop diarrhea right away. Your healthcare provider will tell you how to take loperamide (an anti-diarrheal medication) at home, which you should start taking as soon as diarrhea develops. In some cases, diarrhea can lead to severe dehydration. Notify your healthcare team if diarrhea does not stop on this medication so they can help you better manage this side effect.

Runny nose, excess saliva, watery eyes, sweating, and cramping can accompany diarrhea that occurs within the first day of receiving this medication. If any of these symptoms occur during the infusion, notify your nurse. Diarrhea can continue to occur for 10-12 days after the treatment.

**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°F/38°C), 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 oncology care team before scheduling dental appointments or procedures.
- Ask your oncology care team 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 oncology care team 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 oncology care team 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/Advil (ibuprofen), Aleve (naproxen), Celebrex (celecoxib) etc. as these can all increase the risk of bleeding. Please consult with your healthcare team regarding use of these agents and all over the counter medications/supplements while on therapy.
- Do not floss or use toothpicks and use a soft-bristle toothbrush to brush your teeth.

**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.

**Nausea and/or Vomiting**

Talk to your oncology care team 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 saltines, or ginger ale to lessen symptoms.

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

**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 oncology care team 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.

**Mouth Ulcers (Mucositis)**

Certain cancer treatments can cause sores or soreness in your mouth and/or throat. Notify your oncology care team 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 with warm water mouth rinse (2 level teaspoons of baking soda or 1 level teaspoon of 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.

**Less common, but important side effects can include:**

- **Allergic Reactions:** In some cases, patients can have an allergic reaction to this medication. Signs of a reaction can include: shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chest pain, swelling of the face, eyelids or lips, rash, flushing, 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.
- **Lung Changes:** This medication may cause interstitial lung disease, which is a scarring and stiffening of the lung tissue. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have new or worsening shortness of breath, cough, wheezing or difficulty breathing.

**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, and for at least 1 month for women, and 4 months for men, after treatment. Even if your menstrual cycle stops or you believe you are not producing sperm, you could still be fertile and conceive. You should not breastfeed while receiving this medication and for one month after the final dose.