MyelomaUK

DT-PACE treatment combination

Treatment Guide

What is DT-PACE?

DT-PACE is a treatment combination used for myeloma patients who have received several previous treatments or who are refractory to treatment.

DT-PACE is a combination of six medicines:

- **Dexamethasone –** a steroid
- **Thalidomide –** an immunomodulatory drug (IMiD) that works by stimulating the immune system
- **Cisplatin –** a chemotherapy
- **Adriamycin® (doxorubicin) –** a chemotherapy
- **Cyclophosphamide –** a chemotherapy
- **Etoposide –** a chemotherapy

How is DT-PACE given?

DT-PACE is given continuously over 4 days through a central (HICKMAN®) line. This temporary line remains in place for the duration of treatment. It is inserted into a large vein in the chest.

Dexamethasone is a tablet, taken orally (by mouth), for 4 days. Thalidomide is a capsule taken orally for 28 days.

Adriamycin is an intravenous (IV) fluid bag. Cisplatin, etoposide, and cyclophosphamide are mixed together in an IV fluid bag. Normal IV fluids are also given to help the kidneys function well. These IV fluids are all given through the central line.

DT-PACE is given is hospital and you may stay for approximately 28 days to allow a period of recovery. You may feel unwell and stay in a protective isolation room to prevent infection.

Individual treatment plans vary, your healthcare team will discuss your specific plan.

Possible side effects

DT-PACE has a number of possible side effects which can vary from patient to patient. You will experience some side effects, but it is unlikely you will experience all of them, and most side effects will ease once treatment has finished. Always report any side effects to your healthcare team as soon as possible so they can be treated quickly.

The side effects listed here are those experienced most often. For a complete list of side effects please refer to the patient information leaflet which is included in the pack with the treatment. If you do not have this, ask your healthcare team for it.

Myeloma UK provides a wide range of information booklets about side effects and their management. Relevant booklets are signposted beneath each side effect on the following pages.

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You can find these along with all of our information booklets online at **myeloma.org.uk/library**.

You can also find out more about the management of these side effects by asking your healthcare team or by contacting Myeloma UK.

0800 980 3332 **AskTheNurse@myeloma.org.uk**

myeloma.org.uk

Peripheral neuropathy

The cisplatin and thalidomide can cause damage to nerves in the hands, feet, arms, or legs. This is called peripheral neuropathy. This causes numbness, tingling and pain often in the hands or feet. These sensations can be eased with gentle massage, using hot and cold packs, and nerve painkillers such as gabapentin and pregabalin. Symptoms most often improve or disappear after the dose of cisplatin or thalidomide is reduced or stopped.

For more information see the **Peripheral neuropathy Infosheet** from Myeloma UK.

Sore mouth and throat

DT-PACE can cause pain and inflammation of the mouth and throat, called mucositis. This can make eating and drinking difficult. You may have IV fluids and nutritional supplements until you are able to eat and drink normally. You may also be prescribed mouthwashes and painkillers to ease any discomfort.

For more information see the **Mouth care Infosheet** from Myeloma UK.

Risk of infection

DT-PACE may affect your immune system, increasing your risk of infection. Common signs include: high or low temperature (37.5°C or above, or below 36°C), feeling shivery or cold, passing urine more often or pain on passing urine, cough or cold symptoms.

For more information see the **Infection and myeloma Infosheet** from Myeloma UK.

Blood clots

DT-PACE can cause blood clots to form in the veins. These are most often in the legs, known as deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Clots can occasionally travel to the lungs causing a pulmonary embolism (PE). You may be prescribed an anticoagulant (anti-clotting) medication to prevent or treat any blood clots. Common signs of DVT include areas of your body that are red, swollen, painful, and hot to touch, often in your calf. Signs of a PE require immediate help and include: shortness of breath or chest pain.

For more information see the **Blood clots Infosheet** from Myeloma UK.

Blood clots and infections can become serious if not treated quickly. Contact your healthcare team, or out of hours service if you think you have an infection or clot.

Call 999 if you have chest pain or breathing difficulties.

Hair loss

You may have hair loss that starts within 2 to 4 weeks after your DT-PACE treatment. You may also have loss of eyelashes, eyebrows and other body hair. Hair loss is usually temporary, and it normally grows back within a month of finishing treatment.

Gut problems

DT-PACE can cause diarrhoea or constipation. Staying hydrated and having a balanced diet can help to ease these symptoms. You may also be prescribed laxatives to help you go to the toilet or medicine to reduce the diarrhoea.

DT-PACE may also cause nausea or vomiting. You may be given anti-sickness (anti-emetic) medicine to prevent or reduce nausea and vomiting. You must take them as prescribed rather than waiting until you feel sick. There are several types of anti-sickness medicine. If the one you have is not effective, ask to try another.

For more information see the **Gastrointestinal disturbances Infosheet** from Myeloma UK.

Anaemia and bleeding

DT-PACE can decrease the number of red blood cells, causing anaemia. Symptoms include: shortness of breath, fatigue, and looking paler than usual. DT-PACE can also decrease the number of platelets, increasing your risk of bleeding or bruising. Treatment for these side effects can ease symptoms and boost your blood cell counts.

For more information see the **Fatigue and myeloma Infoguide** and the **Thrombocytopenia and myeloma Infosheet** from Myeloma UK.

Insomnia

Insomnia or problems sleeping at night is a common side effect of dexamethasone. This can be minimised by taking dexamethasone in the morning. However, the best time to take it may vary from person to person and you may need to try different times to find out what works best for you.

Fatigue

Fatigue is a feeling of extreme tiredness that is not relieved by sleep. It usually resolves after treatment has finished. Your treatment, any side effects, and your mental health can all impact on fatigue. It can be managed by treating any medical causes such as anaemia. Allowing time for rest, regular gentle exercise and complementary therapies such as massage, may also help.

For more information see the **Fatigue and myeloma Infoguide** from Myeloma UK.

Increased blood sugar

Dexamethasone may increase your blood sugar levels. If you have diabetes, you may need to check your blood sugars more often. You may also need to change your insulin or other medicines. Blood sugar levels should return to normal once dexamethasone treatment has stopped. Speak to your healthcare team if you are more thirsty than usual or passing more urine than usual.

Mood changes

Dexamethasone can cause significant mood changes or worsen existing mental health conditions. You may feel anxious, tearful, irritable or have mood swings. This can be more noticeable when taking higher doses. Dexamethasone can also affect your judgement, memory, and decision-making skills. If you find your judgement is affected, you should consider if it is safe for you to drive. Telling family and friends about these side effects can help them to understand why your behaviour may change while you are taking dexamethasone. Speak with your healthcare team if you're struggling with your mental health, especially if you're feeling depressed or having suicidal thoughts.

For more information see the **Infopack for living well with myeloma** (section 2) from Myeloma UK.

Stomach pain or indigestion

Dexamethasone can damage or irritate the lining of the stomach and can cause stomach ulcers. It is likely that you will be prescribed an antacid such as lansoprazole or omeprazole to prevent stomach problems.

> ⚠ If you have any stomach pain or vomit blood, contact your healthcare team or out-of-hours service **immediately**.

Fluid retention

Dexamethasone and the large amount of IV fluids can cause swelling of the hands, feet or ankles. This is called peripheral oedema. Fluid may also collect around the stomach area making you feel bloated, or in the chest, causing you to feel short of breath. If you are struggling with fluid retention, your healthcare team may prescribe some diuretics (water tablets) to help your body remove the excess fluid.

Heart problems

Doxorubicin can cause changes to your heart rhythm or heart muscle. You may have tests to check your heart function before your DT-PACE treatment.

Skin changes

Thalidomide can cause a skin rash which may be itchy and need treatment with steroid creams or antihistamines. Some rashes need urgent treatment, including: rashes with swelling of the eyes or mouth, or any problems breathing; rashes that start in one area but begin to spread widely; rashes with high temperatures. Dexamethasone may also cause you to develop stretch marks or acne and your skin may become thinner. You may also find that wounds take longer to heal.

Important information about DT-PACE

You must not take DT-PACE during pregnancy as thalidomide is known to cause severe abnormalities to the baby. If you or your partner could become pregnant, you must follow a strict pregnancy prevention programme. You must use effective contraception while on this treatment, and for at least a year after treatment has finished, if you or your partner could become pregnant.

DT-PACE may affect your fertility and ability to have a child. Talk to your healthcare team about how this may affect you and what your options are. Infertility is usually temporary, but it may be permanent in some cases. DT-PACE may also cause an early menopause.

You should not breastfeed when having DT-PACE as it may pass into the milk.

Supplements or herbal medicines that have not been prescribed by your haematologist may cause harm when taken alongside your prescribed treatment.

You must speak to your healthcare team before taking any kind of supplement or alternative treatment, including herbal, traditional or natural medicines and remedies, and vitamins or wellbeing supplements, to ensure it is safe to do so.

If you have any questions about your treatment, speak to your healthcare team. They are the best people to ask if you have questions about your individual situation. The information in this publication is not meant to replace their advice.

Notes

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MyelomaUK

We're here for everything a diagnosis of myeloma brings

Get in touch to find out more about how we can support you

Call the Myeloma Infoline on
0800 980 3332

Email Ask the Nurse at
AskTheNurse@myeloma.org.uk

Visit our website at
myeloma.org.uk

Trusted Information Creator
Patient Information Forum

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We appreciate your feedback

Please fill in a short online survey about our patient information at **myeloma.org.uk/pifeedback** or email any comments to **patientinfo@myeloma.org.uk**

For a list of references used to develop our resources, visit **myeloma.org.uk/references**