

What is Vincristine?

Vincristine is an anti-cancer agent used to treat different types of leukaemias and solid tumors. It can also be used for non-cancerous conditions.

How does it work?

Vincristine works on cells to prevent DNA synthesis. Vincristine disrupts the formation of mitotic spindles, which stops the cell replicating during metaphase, a specific phase in the life of a cell cycle. Vincristine also interferes with nucleic acid and protein synthesis by preventing the use of an amino acid called glutamic acid.

How is it given?

Vincristine is administered as an intravenous (IV) push or as a short infusion over 15 minutes.

Special instructions:

- Vincristine can cause or worsen constipation. Your doctor may prescribe a stool softener or laxative if you have constipation.
- You may be prescribed a medicine to help with numbness, tingling or pain that can occur with vincristine treatment.
- Tell the nurse right away if you have pain or redness at the site where the injection is given.

Possible Side Effects:

Listed below, but not limited to, are the more commonly experienced side effects that you may see. The side effects your child might experience may be temporary and some may be permanent.

	Likely Happens to 21-100 children out of every 100	Less Likely Happens to 5-20 children out of every 100	Rare but serious Happens to <5 children out of every 100
Immediate Within 1-2 days of receiving the medicine		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jaw pain ▪ Headache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Damage to nearby tissue if the drug leaks out of the vein when being administered ▪ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
Prompt Within 2-3 weeks, prior to the next course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hair loss ▪ Constipation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Muscle weakness, pain, or cramps ▪ Pain and bloating in your abdomen (belly) ▪ A mild drop in white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets in your blood. A low number of white blood cells can make it easier to get infections. Fewer red blood cells may make you feel tired and weak. Fewer platelets may cause you to bruise and bleed more easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete stoppage of your intestinal activity which can result in intestinal blockage ▪ Drooping eyelids ▪ Double vision ▪ Difficulty seeing at night ▪ Hoarseness of your voice ▪ Vocal cord paralysis ▪ Abnormal hormone function which may lower the level of salt in the blood. ▪ Difficulty sweating

Vincristine

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Patient/Caregiver Information

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Delayed Anytime later during therapy, excluding the above conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reversible nerve problems that may affect the way you walk or the feelings in your fingers or toes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Numbness and tingling ▪ Wrist or foot drop ▪ An abnormal walk with foot slapping ▪ Loss of deep tendon reflexes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulty or inability to walk ▪ Difficulty with urination or increase desire to urinate ▪ Dizziness and low blood pressure when you stand ▪ Decreased ability to hear clearly ▪ Damage to the nerve to the eye (optic nerve) leading to decreased vision and possible blindness ▪ In combination with other chemotherapy drugs: damage to the liver which can lead to inflammation and/or scarring which could lead to a yellow appearing skin and fluid collection in the abdomen (belly) which makes it look larger.

This information sheet is a brief overview. Each individual can respond differently to the medication, it is vital that you communicate all signs and symptoms you observe to your doctor or nurse.

If you have any questions about the information provided please discuss them with your oncologist or haematologist.

Further information can be obtained from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist or at the following website:
<http://medsafe.govt.nz/consumers/medicine/where.asp>