

Irinotecan (eye-ri-noh-TEE-kan)

Also Known As: Camptosar[®], CPT-11, irinotecan HCl injection

Irinotecan is a partly manmade (or semisynthetic) drug derived from an extract of the *Camptotheca acuminata*, a plant that grows in Asia. It kills cancer cells by interfering with an enzyme called topo 1. Topo 1 helps DNA unwind so that cells can reproduce.

How It Is Given:

Intravenously (by vein)

Immediate Side Effects (beginning within 24 hours):

- Abdominal cramping can occur while the drug is being given.
- Mild sweating, with or without feeling warm, can occur while the drug is given.
- You may experience nausea and vomiting.
- Diarrhea may occur with this medication.

Early Side Effect (beginning within one week):

- You may experience a runny nose.

Late Side Effects (beginning after one week):

- A temporary decrease in white blood cell count (cells that help fight infection) can develop.
- Possible temporary thinning or loss of hair can occur.
- Diarrhea can occur after the second or third cycle of treatment.
- You may experience fatigue.

Special Points:

- Diarrhea that occurs during or within a few hours of treatment usually goes away by itself. Do not take Imodium[®] (loperamide) under these circumstances, as it can lead to constipation.
- If diarrhea occurs other than on the day of treatment, begin taking Imodium when diarrhea starts. Although the package cautions not to take this much, take two Imodium tablets at the first sign of diarrhea. Then take one tablet every two hours (or two tablets every four hours at night) until you have gone 12 hours without diarrhea. If Imodium is not effective after 36 hours, please call your physician.
- Do not take aspirin, ibuprofen (e.g., Motrin[®], Advil[®]), products containing them, or similar products as listed on the *Common Medicines Containing Aspirin and Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs* fact card unless your doctor prescribes them.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you are taking any other medications, including over-the-counter preparations that do not require a prescription, herbal remedies, vitamins, or dietary supplements. Some of these may interfere with your chemotherapy.

Call Your Doctor or Nurse If You Have:

- A fever of 100.5° F (38° C) or higher.
- Black bowel movements, bruising, faint red rash, or other signs of bleeding.
- Diarrhea of any sort, including an increase in frequency of bowel movements.
- Any unexpected, unexplained problems.
- Any questions or concerns.

The information on this card is selective and does not cover all possible side effects; others may occur. Please report any problems to your doctor.

