



## Paclitaxel (Taxol®)

*At the Clinical Center referred to as Taxol® (TAX-all).*

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**How Given:** Intravenously (by vein)

**Drug Action:** Taxol® prevents cancer cells from dividing by affecting the tiny rods that form the cell's skeleton.

**Side Effects:** 1. Bone marrow effects can include a temporary decrease in white blood cells, platelets, and red blood cells. These usually occur 5 to 14 days from the start of treatment.

2. The nervous system can be affected. Symptoms include

- pain, numbness and tingling, or a “pins and needles” sensation that begin in the fingers and toes
- difficulty with fine movements, such as buttoning clothes or putting on jewelry
- difficulty walking

These symptoms can resolve partially or completely over an extended period after the drug is stopped.

3. Lip, throat, and mouth sores can occur but are uncommon.

4. Temporary hair thinning or hair loss can occur.

5. Mild pain in your muscles and joints can occur 2 or 3 days after the drug is started and resolves within a few days.

6. Mild nausea can occur during treatment.

7. Mild diarrhea can occur.

8. Taxol® can temporarily affect your heart rhythm. You will be monitored closely and treated promptly if significant changes occur.

9. Skin rash can occur.

**Special  
Instructions:**

1. Allergic reactions can occur. You may receive medications to prevent this.
2. Tell your nurse immediately if you have any changes in breathing, lightheadedness, or facial flushing during drug administration.
3. Tell your nurse immediately if the drug stings or burns during treatment. If the drug leaks out of the vein it can damage tissue. Prompt treatment is essential in order to minimize damage.
4. Report “pins and needles” sensations to your NIH doctor. Be careful when handling sharp objects. Avoid extremes of hot and cold.
5. Do not take aspirin or aspirin-containing products unless prescribed by your NIH doctor.
6. Call your NIH doctor or nurse if you
  - have pain, discomfort, or redness at the injection site following treatment
  - have a temperature of 101.0 °F (38.3 °C) at any time, or have a temperature of at least 100.4 °F (38.0 °C) that lasts for 1 hour or occurs two times in a 24-hour period
  - have diarrhea for more than 2 days
  - have any unusual bleeding or bruising
  - Notice your heart beating in an unusual way
  - develop a skin rash



This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Living with Cancer Chemotherapy Series  
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Nursing Department

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