Pemetrexed (pem e TREKS ed)
Patient Education

US Brand Names: **Alimta**
Therapeutic Category: Chemotherapy

**What is this medicine used for?**
Used to treat cancer. More specifically this particular drug works for lung cancer and mesothelioma.

**How does it work?**
Pemetrexed works by killing rapidly growing cells. This drug will affect all fast growing cells, cancer cells and normal cells, in your body.

**What should my doctor or nurse know before I take this medication?**
- If you are allergic to any medicines.
- If you are taking other over the counter or prescription medicines, including vitamins and herbal remedies.
- If you are, or maybe pregnant.
- If you are breast feeding.

**How is this drug given?**
- This medicine can be used alone or in combination with other cancer medicine.
- This medicine is given into a vein.

**What are the general precautions when taking this medicine?**
- Take your vitamin supplements as directed by your doctor. These supplements will begin one week before your first dose of Pemetrexed and continue for about 21 days after your last dose of Pemetrexed.
- Take your steroid medication (dexamethasone (Decadron)) as directed the day before, day of and day after each dose of Pemetrexed.
- Talk with your doctor or nurse before taking aspirin, aspirin-containing products, ibuprofen, Motrin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs), or any other over the counter or prescription medications, including vitamins and herbal remedies.
- Drink 8 to10 glasses of non-caffeinated liquid every day (unless told otherwise by your doctor or nurse).

**What are the common side effects of this medicine?**
- Rash
- Mouth sores
- Fatigue
- Nausea and vomiting: take anti-nausea medication as directed. Call for nausea and vomiting not controlled by prescribed medication and/or inability to eat and drink liquids. (See Patient Teaching Sheet: Nausea and Vomiting)
- May cause a drop in the number of your red blood cells in your body. Red blood cells carry oxygen through out your body. This drop in red blood cells may lead to you feeling tired/fatigued (Anemia). Talk to your doctor or nurse about your risk. (See Patient Teaching Sheet: Fatigue)
- If you or your partner can get pregnant, use birth control during your treatment. Once completing treatment, discuss the timing for discontinuing birth control measures with your provider. (See Patient Teaching Sheet: Fertility)

**Danger signals to report immediately to your doctor or nurse:**

- Signs or symptoms of infection. This include a fever of 100.4 ° F (38 ° C) or greater, chills, severe sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, increased sputum or change in color, painful urination, mouth sores, wound that will not heal, or anal itching or pain.
- Severe nausea or vomiting or diarrhea not controlled by medication.
- Not able to eat or drink.
- Bleeding from your nose, mouth, gums, or in your urine or bowel movements. Bruising that does not heal.
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- Feeling extremely tired, weak dizzy or light headed.

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Reviewed/revised by Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist (T. Baltic) 4/07; 12/09 Robert Carlson, MD 6/07.

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