

PEMBROLIZUMAB (KEYTRUDA®)

Frequently Asked Questions

HOW DOES PEMBROLIZUMAB FIGHT COLORECTAL CANCER?

Pembrolizumab being an immunotherapy drug is designed to stimulate an immune reaction against cancer cells, enabling the body to fight the cancer more effectively. It strengthens the immune system's ability to fight cancer.



WHEN IS PEMBROLIZUMAB USED IN COLORECTAL CANCER AND HOW IS IT ADMINISTERED?

Pembrolizumab is an immunotherapeutic drug that is shown to be useful in the treatment of a small subset of patients with colorectal cancer.

Some patients with advanced colorectal cancer have genetic variations, specifically MSI-H (microsatellite instability-high) or dMMR (mismatch repair deficiency) that are generally less responsive to standard treatments, and could be potential candidates for immunotherapy.

Pembrolizumab is administered intravenously (through your veins). If you qualify for Pembrolizumab, your dose and duration of treatment will depend on your weight as well as other medical conditions, and will be determined by your oncologist.

WHAT DO I NEED TO BE AWARE OF WHEN STARTING PEMBROLIZUMAB?

It is important to ensure your healthcare team is informed of the following when starting care with Pembrolizumab:

- Information regarding past and current medical conditions and medications consumed. Be sure to mention all kinds of medicines including over the counter drugs, vitamin or herbal supplements, and prescribed regular medicines. It is important to keep your healthcare team informed of any changes in your medications and enquire with them before starting any new medicine/immunization.
- Specifically ensure focusing on any auto-immune conditions.
- History of your drug and food allergies.
- If you are pregnant or expecting or breast-feeding.

When on Pembrolizumab, you will have regular blood work done for evaluation. Make sure you follow the schedule as advised by your healthcare team.

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WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS I NEED TO BE MINDFUL OF?

Not all patients will experience all of the side effects mentioned. If you do experience any side effects, be sure to talk to your medical team to learn about options to help manage and prevent the worsening of side effects. It is important to note that most patients on immunotherapy drugs like Pembrolizumab have no, or milder side effects relative to patients on traditional treatment options like chemotherapy/radiation therapy. This usually means that patients on immunotherapy have a better quality of life.

Most side effects will go away entirely once treatment has ended; however, some side effects can be cumulative and may become more severe with time or when given in combination with other drugs. Speak to your oncologist to find out how to best manage your side effects.

You will have regular monitoring for liver function, thyroid function, and serum electrolytes. Make sure to inform your healthcare team in case you experience any of the aforementioned symptoms. Your oncologist will discuss all side effects more thoroughly, including the rare ones.

The most common side effects are:



Feeling tired



Itching



Rash



Constipation



Pain in muscles, bones or joints,
and abdomen



Diarrhea



Nausea



Shortness of breath



Cough



Fever



Decreased appetite

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HOW DO I ACCESS PEMBROLIZUMAB THERAPY?

If you are eligible for Pembrolizumab immunotherapy, you can access it in the following ways:

- Speaks with your oncologist about the therapy and enquire regarding clinical trials that you can participate in.
- You can also get information about Pembrolizumab therapy from the Colorectal Cancer Canada (CCC) website and/or contact our patient support specialists for more information.

In 2021, the CADTH pCODR Expert Review Committee (pERC) recommended that pembrolizumab should be reimbursed for the first-line treatment of metastatic microsatellite instability-high (MSI-H) or mismatch repair deficient (dMMR) colorectal cancer.

THIS MEANS THAT PATIENTS STARTING FIRST-LINE TREATMENT WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE REIMBURSED ACCESS TO PEMBROLIZUMAB (KEYTRUDA) IN ALL INSTITUTIONS ACROSS CANADA.

WHAT RESOURCES CAN I USE FOR MORE SUPPORT AND INFORMATION?

For more information on accessing and managing Immunotherapy, please check out CCC's Immunotherapy Patient & Caregiver Guide. For more detailed information regarding Pembrolizumab, consult with your healthcare team, contact us at CCC, and check out:

<https://chemocare.com/chemotherapy/drug-info/Pembrolizumab.aspx>.

COLORECTAL CANCER CANADA IS HERE FOR YOU EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

If you can't find what you are looking for, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@colorectalcancer.ca. If you would like to speak to someone who has previously been on this therapy, we can help match you to a patient through our buddy system.

Support Groups: Colorectal Cancer Canada offers a variety of different support groups with trained staff and social workers. These support groups are offered monthly and allow you to meet with colorectal cancer patients and caregivers, and ask questions that you may have about Pembrolizumab.