PENTAMIDINE
Parent/Caregiver Information

Introduction
This fact sheet explains what pentamidine is, how it is given and some of the possible side effects. Some rare and long term side effects are explained as well as the more common ones. Each person reacts differently to drugs, so your child will not necessarily suffer every side effect mentioned. If you are concerned about any of these side effects, please ring one of the contact numbers on this fact sheet and ask for your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

What is pentamidine?
Pentamidine is a drug given to children to prevent a type of chest infection called Pneumocystis (carinii) Jiroveci Pneumonia, commonly referred to as ‘PCP’. This infection is due to an organism (bug) that is probably present in most people’s lungs. Children who are receiving long term drugs that interfere with the body’s ability to cope with infections may be more at risk from this type of pneumonia. The symptoms of this infection are a raised temperature, rapid breathing and a dry cough.

How is it given?
Pentamidine is given as a 2 hour intravenous (i.v) infusion once a month, through a cannula, Hickman line or implantable port.

What are the less common side effects?
Side effects caused by pentamidine are uncommon. Those that may be noticed are listed below:

Skin rash: Please contact CHOC if your child develops a rash or skin reaction. They will advise you on the appropriate treatment.

Nausea and vomiting: This is usually uncommon. Anti-sickness drugs can be given to reduce or prevent these symptoms. Please tell your doctor or nurse if your child’s sickness persists.

Diarrhoea or stomach pain: This is uncommon. Please tell your doctor or nurse if your child has diarrhoea or stomach pain which persists.

The levels of sugar in your child’s blood may change temporarily: The levels of blood sugars in your child’s blood may change temporarily. This may occur one day to several weeks after the infusion. Their blood sugar levels will be checked regularly by blood tests. Please contact CHOC if your child is very thirsty or if they are passing more urine than usual (signs of increased sugar level), or if they are experiencing chills, headache, increased hunger, shakiness or have cool pale skin (signs of decreased sugar level).

Light-headedness: This is due to a decrease in blood pressure (hypotension). Your nurse will monitor the blood pressure before and during the pentamidine infusion. If your child feels light-headed, dizzy or faint during the infusion please tell your nurse.
Changes in liver function: Pentamidine may change how well your child’s liver works. Blood tests (LFTs) will be taken to monitor your child’s liver function during treatment.

Bone marrow suppression: Rarely pentamidine may cause a temporary reduction in how well your child’s bone marrow works. This means he or she may become anaemic, bruise or bleed more easily than usual, and have a higher risk of infection. Your child’s blood count will be checked regularly to see how the bone marrow is working. Please contact CHOC if your child seems unusually tired, has bruising or bleeding, or any signs of infection, especially a high temperature (>38°C).

Altered kidney function: Pentamidine may change how well your child’s kidneys work over a period of time. Your child may have a blood and urine test before treatment is started and then at stages during and after treatment to monitor kidney function.

Use of other medication:
Check with your doctor or pharmacist before giving your child other prescription or over-the-counter medications that is not part of your child’s chemotherapy or supportive therapy protocol.

Always practice safe sex, especially when receiving chemotherapy treatment, to avoid chemical transmission to your sexual partner and prevent unwanted pregnancies and Sexually Transmissible Infections (STI’s).

For more information on safe sex, speak to your parents or a health professional.

More Information:
If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to ask. More information can be obtained from the following:

- CHOC Phone (03) 364 1821
- Clinical Outpatient Co-ordinator Phone (03) 364 1821
- CHOC Pharmacist Phone (03) 364 0640
  Pager 8259
- Shared Care Nurse Phone (03) 364 1899