

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENTS RECEIVING CHEMOTHERAPY

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1. Some chemotherapy drugs have the potential to cause nausea and vomiting. However, medications are currently available which are highly effective in controlling and/or eliminating this side effect. You will be given these medications as needed with your chemotherapy and prescriptions for home use. If vomiting is unrelieved, call the office for further instructions.
2. Drink 6-8 glasses of fluids, especially water, per day. This is especially important the week of chemotherapy. You should eat a light meal prior to each chemotherapy treatment. Avoid very greasy or spicy foods on treatment days.
3. Chemotherapy may affect your taste buds and/or cause a metallic taste. If this is a problem, try eating with plastic utensils instead of regular silverware. Sucking on peppermint candy, eating tomato-based foods, a dill pickle or unsweetened lemonade may decrease the metallic taste.
4. Mouth care is very important. Brushing your teeth and/or rinsing your mouth after every meal is recommended. Avoid commercial mouthwashes, as they contain alcohol and may irritate and dry your mouth. You may use hydrogen peroxide or baking soda in water as a mouthwash. You may also use Biotene or Prevention toothpaste and mouthwash or Crest mouthwash, which is alcohol free. B-Complex vitamins can help eliminate or reduce mouth sores. Use a vitamin formula that gives you 50 to 100mg of B-6 (pyridoxine) daily. Report any soreness of mouth or gums and/or sore throat. If possible, schedule routine dental work prior to starting chemotherapy. Check with the office prior to dental work scheduled during chemotherapy. If you have a port you will need to contact the office prior to any dental visit.
5. Seven to ten days after chemotherapy your white blood cell count may decrease resulting in an increased risk of infection. Immediately report any temperature of 101⁰ F or higher. Monitor a low-grade temperature (less than 101⁰ F) but do not take Tylenol, as this will hide or mask your fever. Report any other signs of infection. Avoid contact with anyone known to have a communicable disease (i.e.; cold or flu.)
6. Fatigue is one of the most common side effects of chemotherapy. Fatigue is more profound than just feeling tired. 7-10 days after treatment your red blood cell count may drop resulting in fatigue and weakness.
7. Avoid permanents or hair coloring during and up to 6-8 weeks after treatments are completed. Complete hair loss or thinning is a possible side effect of chemotherapy. Information on wigs is available from your nurse.
8. Chemotherapy increases your sensitivity to sunlight. Use a sunscreen with a 30 SPF and wear a hat to protect your face.

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9. Chemotherapy may alter or stop your menstrual periods. However, ovulation may continue and birth control is necessary. Except for very rare circumstances, it is important to know that there is no harm for either partner in participating in intimate relations. Some cancer treatments may cause physical changes which make sexual intercourse more difficult. For more information on issues of sexuality refer to your "*Chemo and You*" booklet or talk with your nurse or doctor.
10. Chemotherapy may increase the risk for bleeding. Report any increased bruising or other signs of bleeding. Do not take aspirin unless prescribed by a physician. You may take Tylenol or Ibuprofen for headache or pain.
11. Chemotherapy is very drying to the skin and mucous membranes. Apply lotion frequently especially after bathing. Sensitive skin formulas would be your best choice. Avoid very hot showers or baths.
12. Diarrhea can result from chemotherapy. If you have more than 3 loose stools in a 24 hour period, you should take Imodium AD. The recommended dose is 1 or 2 tablets after each loose stool with a maximum of 12 tablets per day. If diarrhea continues after 2 days, please call your physician. During this time it is important to be drinking 8-10 glasses of liquids daily; focus on water.
13. There many reasons why constipation may be present. (See the "*Chemotherapy and You*" book) If this occurs, a daily stool softener is recommended. You may take senna (Senokot-S is a brand name) starting at one tablet twice daily. If constipation persists, start the following laxative protocol:
 - a) Take two Senokot-S tablets at bedtime with one tablespoon of Milk of Magnesia.
 - b) If you do not have a bowel movement in the morning – take two Senokot-S after breakfast with hot lemon water.
 - c) If you do not have a bowel movement by evening – take three Senokot-S tablets at bedtime.
 - d) If you do not have a bowel movement in the morning – take three Senokot-S tablets after breakfast.
 - e) If there is no bowel movement within 48 hours after beginning this protocol – Please consult your physician for additional instructions.
14. Due to chemical hazards in the infusion area and the immunocompromised status of our patients, no one under 12 is allowed in the infusion area. Due to limited space in our infusion area, only one visitor per patient is permitted.
15. Although we have two locations, all phone calls are routed to our central office. The phone number is 812-471-1200. A nurse is available to answer any questions and/or discuss any problems from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. CST Monday through Friday. After hours or on weekends and holidays, if there is an urgent problem, you may call the same number and our answering service will take your phone number and have the on-call doctor return your call as soon as possible. For medication refills call at least 48 hours prior to needing the medication.