

Getting Started

What to expect while going through treatments



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CONTACTING THE OFFICE

We are here to help, and early intervention can help prevent complications.

Call the main number **for your provider's office**. This number is answered 24/7.

Listen carefully and select the most appropriate option:

- ① Provider or a **provider's office** calling: NOT for patient use
- ② Scheduling and medical advice: Any appointment questions and/or questions regarding prescription, symptoms, or medical advice
- ③ Billing Department
- ④ Direct extension: NOT for patient use



Be prepared to provide the operator with the below information:

- Patient name and DOB
- Provider name and the location you are seen at
- Brief reason for your call
- Best number to reach you at

Non-urgent or non-symptom related questions may be sent through the [Navigating Care](#) Patient Portal.



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My Treatment Regimen

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4	DAY 5	DAY 6	DAY 7
DAY 8	DAY 9	DAY 10	DAY 11	DAY 12	DAY 13	DAY 14
DAY	DAY	DAY	DAY	DAY	DAY	DAY
DAY	DAY	DAY	DAY	DAY	DAY	DAY

Cycle: Treatment repeated on a regular schedule with periods of rest in between

Your treatment is _____ day cycle



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TYPES OF TREATMENT

Chemotherapy

- Destroys cells by preventing their growth or multiplication
- Can affect "healthy cells" that grow quickly
 - This leads to side effects of chemotherapy

Targeted Therapies

- Some cancer cells express receptors
- Targeted therapies bind to those receptors for direct cell kill
- Side effects are dependent on target of the therapy

Immunotherapies

- Help the immune system recognize and attack cancer cells
- Side effects are related to over activation of the immune system



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SKIN CHANGES

Why does this happen?

- Some medications can irritate the skin leading to a rash or other skin changes

What can be done about a rash?

- Daily cleansing with gentle products
- Avoid skin care products that contain alcohol
- Pat skin dry, no rubbing
- Avoid sun exposure

What can be done about hand and foot syndrome?

- Can occur with 5FU, gemcitabine
- Palms of hands and soles of feet become reddened/tender, swollen
- Keep skin moisturized and away from exposure to heat



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MOUTH CHANGES

What can happen?

- Mouth sores
- Taste changes
- Dry mouth

Why does it happen?

- Fast growing cells in the mouth

Taste changes:

- Wax and wane
- May notice bitter, earthy or metallic taste

Dry Mouth:

- Changes saliva pH
- Stay hydrated
- Use dry mouth rinses



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MOUTH CHANGES

Mouth Sores: what are they?

- Present as blisters or ulcerations
- Painful, quick to heal
- Possible risk of infection

When To Call

- Mouth changes impact your ability or desire to eat or drink

How do I manage them?

- Practice oral hygiene to avoid complications
 - Gently brush and floss each day
 - Avoid whiteners or tartar control in toothpaste
 - Use alcohol free mouthwash twice daily
 - Salt water & Baking soda rinse:
 - ¼ tsp baking soda, ¼ tsp salt + 1 Cup warm water
 - Swish and spit 3-4 times a day



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NAUSEA

Why does it happen?

- Chemotherapy stimulates nausea receptors in the brain and GI tract

What do we do about it?

- Based on potential for nausea, certain medications are given
- Medications block pathways preventing vomiting and controlling nausea
- At home anti-nausea pills may be prescribed if indicated
 - Please take as directed by your provider



When to Call

- Uncontrolled nausea
- Vomiting

What else may help?

- Ginger can be helpful
- small frequent meals/snacks
- Avoid fatty, spicy, greasy foods and foods with strong odors
 - Try room temperature foods



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BOWEL CHANGES: CONSTIPATION

Why does it happen?

- Medications slow down the gut

How do I prevent it?

- Activity and hydration
- Fiber rich foods
- Smooth Move tea
- Over the counter stool softeners
 - Colace
 - Senokot-s

WHEN to CALL

- No stool for 2 days
- Only hard small stools for 2 days



See NCI Eating Hints for additional suggestions on foods that may help



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BOWEL CHANGES: DIARRHEA

Why does it happen?

- May be caused by certain medications
 - fluorouracil, irinotecan, pertuzumab

How do I manage it?

- Maintain fluid intake
- Limit dairy intake
- Over the counter medications
 - Imodium
- Low fiber food
 - See NCI Eating Hints page 15-16 for additional suggestions

WHEN DO I CALL MY ONCOLOGIST?

- More than 3 diarrhea episodes in the same day
- Blood or mucus in diarrhea
- Last longer than 24 hours



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HOW DO I AVOID DEHYDRATION?

Why should I stay hydrated?

- Prevents constipation and dehydration
- Protects kidneys
- Helps body process treatment

How much should I drink?

- Recommendation is 64 -80oz of fluid/day
 - At least ½ should be water
 - Caffeinated beverages in moderation



WHEN DO I CALL MY ONCOLOGIST?

- Lightheadedness
- Dizziness
- Urinary changes



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WHAT CAN I EAT DURING CHEMOTHERAPY?

What should I eat?

- Well balanced diet
 - ChooseMyPlate.gov
- Adjust based on side effects
 - NCI Eating Hints
- Report all supplements and high dose vitamins to oncologist prior to starting treatment
 - May interact with other medications or interfere with effectiveness of treatment



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BLOOD WORK

How often is blood work done?

- Blood work/labs are checked on a regular basis depending on treatment



Why?

- Provides information about how your body is doing
 - Electrolytes, liver function, and kidney function
 - Platelets and Red blood cells
 - Immune system (White blood cells)



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PLATELETS

What are platelets?

- Help with the clotting process

What happens?

- Gradual decline throughout treatment
 - Increased risk of bleeding

What can be done?

- Depending on lab results, provider may recommend transfusion
- Bleeding precautions if needed

When To Call

- Unusual bleeding or bruising
- Tiny, red pinpoint spots on your skin
- Frequent nosebleeds



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RED BLOOD CELLS

What are red blood cells?

- Help circulate oxygen throughout the body

What happens with chemo?

- Gradual decline throughout treatment

What can be done?

- Depending on lab results, provider may recommend transfusion

When to Call

- Shortness of breath
- Dizzy or lightheaded
- Racing heartbeat
- Excessively weak or tired



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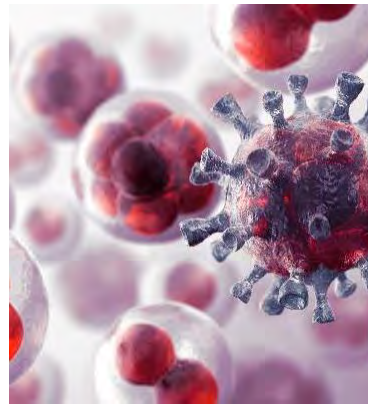
WHITE BLOOD CELLS

What are white blood cells (WBC)?

- Part of the immune system

What happens with chemo?

- Chemo can damage the bone marrow causing a decreased production of WBCs
 - Predictable drop in WBCs
 - Lowest point may vary depending on frequency of your medication and how it works



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WHITE BLOOD CELLS

WBC decreased = increased risk of infection

How to prevent infection:

- Proper hand hygiene
- Avoid people who are ill
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables with water and friction
- General food safety precautions



When to Call

- ❑ Fever ≥ 100.5
- ❑ Chills or sweats
- ❑ New cough
- ❑ Cold or flu like symptoms
- ❑ White coating in your mouth
- ❑ Urinary changes



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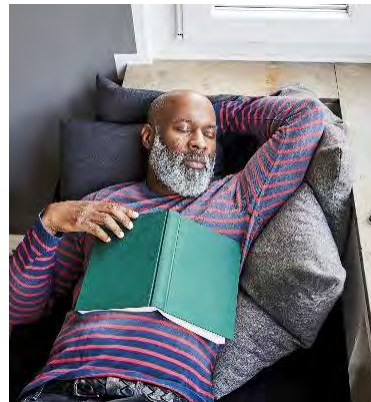
FATIGUE

Why does this happen?

- Many reasons: anemia, nutritional deficiencies, depression, stress
- Unlike fatigue from lack of rest

When will I notice it?

- Cumulative effect
- A couple days after treatment you will likely be more fatigued than other days
 - Body working hard flushing out treatment and dead cells while building new healthy cells
 - This pattern may not be as **noticeable if you're taking** treatment for multiple days in a row



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FATIGUE



How do I manage it?

- "Get up and get moving"
 - Move
 - Eat
 - Drink
 - Rest
- Energy conservation
 - Plan activities for when your energy is best
 - Take rest breaks when you need it

What about activity?

- Increasing activity will have positive impact
- Intensity, frequency and type of activity still being studied
- Improves aerobic capacity, prevents muscle loss and deconditioning, manages fatigue



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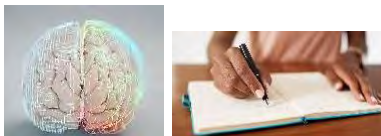
COGNITIVE CHANGES

What is it?

- Patients feel like they're in a "brain fog"
- Difficulty multitasking or concentrating
- Difficulty word finding

Why does it happen?

- Not fully understood
- Related to treatment, stress, anxiety sleep disturbances, etc



How do we prevent/minimize it?

- Adequate rest
- Well balanced diet
- Exercise
- Brain exercise
 - Crossword, Sudokus, Reading, etc

How do I manage it?

- Be patient with yourself
- Lists
- Smart phone to set reminders
- Apps to track things



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COPING

Is it normal to feel this way?

- Yes, increased distress is normal
- May feel many different emotions

What can be done?

- Resources available at Compass
- Coping mechanisms
 - Physical movement & exercise
 - Meditation & Mindfulness
 - Journaling
 - Activities that help you relax or bring you meaning

When to Call

- Depression
- Thoughts of death or harming yourself



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COMMON QUESTIONS

Can I travel?

- Speak with your oncologist about your plans
- Keep medication in carry on luggage
- PLAN AHEAD to ensure you have enough medication
- Keep medications in original container
- Make sure meds are not stored someplace too hot or too cold
- You may need a note from your oncologist especially if traveling internationally

What if I'm admitted to the hospital?

- Notify your oncologist about ANY hospital admission
- Bring your oral cancer medication to the hospital
 - Do not give to hospital unless you know you will receive it back

How do I disposal of unwanted or expired medications?

- Visit <https://www.dea.gov/content/partnership-toolbox> for National Takeback days and disposal locations



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COMMON QUESTIONS

- Can I work?
 - Most likely, yes
 - FMLA, Americans with Disability Act
 - www.cancerandcareers.org
- Can I get vaccines?
 - Check with your oncology provider before receiving
- Can I be with my family?
 - Of course! Use common sense to avoid infection
- What about intimacy?
 - Use barrier method
- Can I drink alcohol?
 - In moderation;
 - Max 1 serving and not every day



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WHEN TO CALL

- Chills or fever greater than 100.4
- Burning with urination, frequency, urgency, lower back pain (UTI)
- Productive cough with green, yellow, red, or brown sputum
- Unmanaged diarrhea, constipation, nausea, vomiting
- Unmanaged pain
- Swelling, redness and pain on extremities
- Shortness of breath/chest pain
- Dizziness with changing position or lightheadedness
- Dark urine, less urine than normal, thirst, dry mouth
- Mouth sore, difficulty swallowing, frequent or severe heartburn
- Severe fatigue
- Thoughts of harming yourself, severe depression



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