

Strategies

Infection
Anemia
Nausea
Mouth Sore
Abdominal
Constipation
Diarrhea
Pain
Skin
Hair Loss
Distress

Your patient advocates
in next-generation cancer care



Quick Guide - Coping Strategies for Chemotherapy

The purpose of the Quick Guide is to offer a glance at coping strategies for patients considering or undergoing Chemotherapy.

Managing the Risk of Infection

Symptoms of Infection

Fever > 100 F (38 C)
Sore throat
Urinary changes (e.g., pain)
Diarrhea
Red or tender wound site
Drainage or oozing (e.g.,
discolored vaginal discharge)
Chills Sweating
Mouth sores
Sinus pain, earache, headache

You can help avoid infections

- * Wash your hands often
- * Avoid crowds and sick people
- * Avoid recently vaccinated children
- * Be extra careful about personal hygiene

Some medications can help reduce
the risk of infections by boosting the
white blood cell count

Example ... Neulasta (pegfilgrastim)



Neutropenic complications can be life threatening and
symptoms should be **reported immediately**.

Use your Refrigerator Magnet to remind you of the symptoms
Carry your Alert Card with you at all times

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Chemo Related Anemia

Without enough RBCs, your body tissues do not get enough oxygen to work properly causing:

Tiredness

Shortness of breath

Dizziness

Rapid heartbeat

Anemia is the term for a low **red blood cell (RBC) count**. RBCs contain hemoglobin, which delivers oxygen

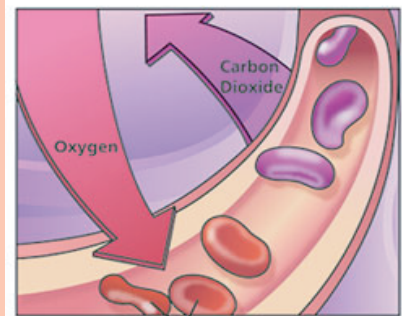
Some medications can help your body produce more RBCs reducing the need for transfusions
Darbepoetin alfa (Aranesp); Epoetin alfa (Procrit)

What you can do to help cope with anemia symptoms

- * Get plenty of rest
- * Ask friends or family to help with chores
- * Eat a well-balanced diet
- * Limit your activities to things that are essential or most important to you

Iron supplementation may be required

Red blood cells take up oxygen from the lungs and release carbon dioxide back to the lungs.



Red blood cells transport oxygen to the rest of the body.

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Nausea & Vomiting

Medication will be given before every chemotherapy cycle to help prevent nausea and vomiting.

Be sure to fill your prescriptions for your anti-nausea medication.

Carry your anti-nausea medication with you in case you should need it while not at home.

Take your anti-nausea medication when nausea starts.

Nutritional Strategies to help minimize nausea:

Drink clear fluids (water, Gatorade, ginger ale, etc.)

Try to eat small amounts of cool, bland foods frequently (every 2 hours). Often keeping something in your stomach helps minimize nausea.

Try bland, soft, non-acidic foods.

Soups
Sandwiches
Cereal
Baked meats
Potatoes, breads, pasta.



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Mouth Sores (Oral Mucositis)

**DO NOT USE
Commercial Mouthwash**

Good oral care:

Brush after every meal with a soft toothbrush
Use salt and soda swish after eating to keep mouth clean (NO Commercial Mouthwash i.e. Scope)

Keep mouth moist: drink plenty of water, chew sugarless gum

Use lip balm

See your dentist

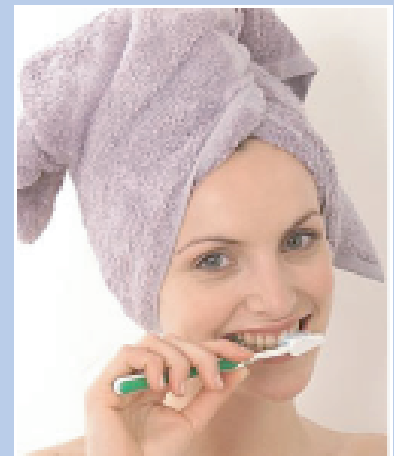
Prevention of Mouth Sores

TRY THIS ...

Salt and Baking Soda Gargle
1 teaspoon of salt
1 teaspoon of baking soda
1 quart of warm water

Shake together to dissolve the salt and baking soda. It will be more comfortable if used at room temperature.

Use as you would mouthwash after meals, sugary drinks, and before going to sleep at night.



Nutrition changes:

Eat foods that are cool or at room temperature
Avoid spicy, acidic, or sharp crunchy foods
Eat soft foods

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Abdominal Irritation, Constipation, Diarrhea

Acid Reflux

Due to the irritation of the gastric and esophageal mucosa.

Tips:

Sleep on more pillows
Elevate head of the bed.
Avoid laying down after meals.
Use Pepcid AC, TUMS, Maalox, or Mylanta for infrequent problems.

You may need a prescription acid reducer for persistent reflux.

Managing Constipation

- * Eat food high in fiber (unless they cause nausea)
- * Raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, raisins, etc.
- * Drink plenty of fluids: water, Gatorade, juices.
- * Try exercise if you are up to it- go for a walk or bike ride.
- * Try over the counter stool softener with mild non-stimulant laxative
Colace- stool softener
Senekot-S- mild laxative with stool softener added



Management of Diarrhea

Uncontrolled, ongoing diarrhea can lead to dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, and feeling poor.

Use Imodium AD when the diarrhea begins.

Stay hydrated with water and liquids that do not contain caffeine.

If diarrhea is continuous use the BRAT diet until diarrhea slows ...

Bananas
Rice
Applesauce
Toast



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Pain and Pain Management

There are many reasons that you may feel pain

- * As a result of having surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy
- * You have sores in your mouth (mucositis) or other areas of your digestive track
- * Tumor pressing on normal tissues
- * Neuropathies: numbness and tingling

Mild pain can be treated with common pain relievers such as acetaminophen.

More severe pain may require stronger prescription drugs.

Tell your doctor about any pain so you can both decide the best way to treat it.



Managing Skin Problems



Chemotherapy can affect your skin

Itchiness and redness
Dryness and peeling
Acne; brittle nails
Sensitivity to the sun



There are ways to manage skin problems

Take quick showers rather than long baths
Use skin creams and lotions
Avoid perfumes, colognes, and aftershaves
Use sunscreen
Wear wide-brimmed hats and long sleeves
Wear gloves when washing dishes

Some symptoms indicate serious problems and should be reported immediately to your doctor.

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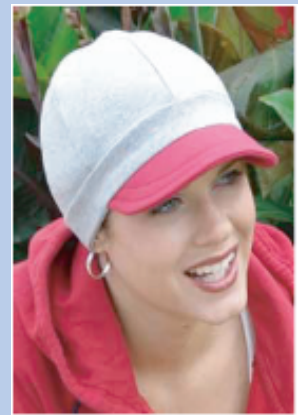
Managing Hair Loss

Develop a plan:

Consult your hair stylist or visit a wig shop
Consider a short haircut before hair loss begins
Obtain hats, scarves, or turbans
Protect yourself from exposure to sun and cold

Chemotherapy can cause hair thinning or complete hair loss.

Some patients report scalp sensitivity prior to losing their hair.



Managing Distress

Having cancer and undergoing chemotherapy are inherently distressing.

Emotions range from natural reactions like tears and sadness to problems that can become disabling such as:
Depression-Anxiety
Panic-Isolation

Distressed patients have trouble making decisions about treatment and adhering to treatment.

Medical professionals understand and have access to considerable resources to help.

Medications
Support groups
Individual counseling
Family support
Relaxation, meditation, and creative therapies (e.g., art, music)
Pastoral services (spiritual guidance)
Other sources of help include
The library
The internet...used wisely (remember not all information is accurate)