



Chemotherapy

Mercy Regional Cancer Center



Learning that you have cancer can be one of the most devastating moments in your life. You may feel angry, frightened, sad and overwhelmed all at the same time. These reactions are very normal. No matter how strong you are, cancer affects you both physically and emotionally.

We have created this resource binder to help ease the burden you and your loved ones may feel. We encourage you to put all information related to your diagnosis and treatment in this binder. Keeping all of your information together and organized will make it easier for you and your loved ones to communicate with your care team.

We encourage you to bring this binder to every appointment, and use it to keep track of your treatments, test results, medications, symptoms and appointments. The information included initially is limited, so as to not overwhelm you. We will provide additional information and resources as your treatment progresses.

We also encourage you to visit Cancer.MercyHealthSystem.org. Here you'll find information on cancer diagnosis, treatment, nutrition, support groups and instructional videos, as well as testimonials of individuals who have gone through treatment before you.

You are not alone in this journey. We are here for you, and are dedicated to supporting you every step of the way.

Mercy oncology team

*"Cancer is a word, not a sentence."
—John Diamond*



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This section tells you what to expect during your chemo therapy treatment and a sample calendar of your treatment schedule.

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Side effects are common. During your appointments, your care team will ask you how you feel and if you have issues affecting your day-to-day tasks. We can offer you help with side effects, so please mention them or call us between visits.

These are the most common and troublesome side effects:

- Fatigue
- Pain
- Fever
- Loss of Appetite
- Constipation/diarrhea
- Vomiting/nausea
- Weight loss/weight gain
- Mouth sores/dry mouth
- Sore throat/trouble swallowing

Nutrition—It is amazing how much food and nutrition can affect how you feel, so consider seeing our nutritionist, Sharon Swanson, BS, RD, CDE. She is a great resource for managing side effects as well. Please keep information you receive from Sharon in this section for future reference.

You can add recipes, modified diets and shopping/meal planning resources to this section.

Section 5: Internet resources

Our website has the most up-to-date links and resources for all your treatment needs. It is a great resource for you, your family and friends.

Section 6: Mercy Health System resources

Please put the Welcome Folder you received during your first visit to the Mercy hematology/oncology clinic in this section for quick reference.

Section 7: Notes

*“Some days there won’t be a song in your heart. Sing anyway.”
—Emory Austin*



When and who to call

Mercy hematology/oncology clinic

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 am-5 pm

Phone: (608) 756-6871

*Messages received after 4:30 pm will be answered the following morning. After clinic hours, calls are transferred to our answering service and one of our providers is paged.

Fax: (608) 756-6836

To schedule or change an appointment: (608) 756-6871

Call 911 for:

- Loss of consciousness
- Uncontrolled or new onset of seizures
- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Inability to breathe or extreme shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Any other emergency situation

Call Dr. Robinson's clinic at (608) 756-6885 immediately for:

- Fever greater than 100.4° F, shaking or chills
- Confusion or disorientation
- Pain not controlled with medication
- Severe or persistent vomiting more than 24 hours after chemotherapy
- Unusual bleeding, bruising or rash of any kind
- Clumsiness or dizziness when getting up
- Sudden change in bowel or urinary habits
- Any problem that you feel needs immediate attention

Consult your binder for information and suggestions, and call Dr. Robinson's clinic at (608) 756-6885 for:

- Watery diarrhea
- Constipation lasting more than three days
- Frequency, urgency or burning urination
- Increased cough and/or sputum (saliva) production
- Sore mouth or throat, or difficult or painful swallowing
- New or unusual swelling or lumps
- Extreme fatigue
- Redness, tenderness or drainage
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- Numbness or tingling

If you are concerned about other symptoms or issues, please do not hesitate to call your care team at (608) 756-6885.



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Call 911 for:

- Loss of consciousness
- Uncontrolled or new onset of seizures
- Uncontrolled bleeding
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Call Dr. Khan's clinic at (608) 756-6880 immediately for:

- Fever greater than 100.4° F, shaking or chills
- Confusion or disorientation
- Pain not controlled with medication
- Severe or persistent vomiting more than 24 hours after chemotherapy
- Unusual bleeding, bruising or rash of any kind
- Clumsiness or dizziness when getting up
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Fax: (608) 756-6836

To schedule or change an appointment: (608) 756-6871

Call 911 for:

- Loss of consciousness
- Uncontrolled or new onset of seizures
- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Inability to breathe or extreme shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Any other emergency situation

Call Dr. Shekhani's clinic at (608) 756-6886 immediately for:

- Fever greater than 100.4° F, shaking or chills
- Confusion or disorientation
- Pain not controlled with medication
- Severe or persistent vomiting more than 24 hours after chemotherapy
- Unusual bleeding, bruising or rash of any kind
- Clumsiness or dizziness when getting up
- Sudden change in bowel or urinary habits
- Any problem that you feel needs immediate attention

Consult your binder for information and suggestions, and call Dr. Shekhani's clinic at (608) 756-6886 for:

- Watery diarrhea
- Constipation lasting more than three days
- Frequency, urgency or burning urination
- Increased cough and/or sputum (saliva) production
- Sore mouth or throat, or difficult or painful swallowing
- New or unusual swelling or lumps
- Extreme fatigue
- Redness, tenderness or drainage
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
- Numbness or tingling

If you are concerned about other symptoms or issues, please do not hesitate to call your care team at (608) 756-6886.



Treatment records

Please put important health information you receive during treatment in this section for quick reference.

*"Never, never, never give up."
—Winston Churchill*



Instructions for your first day of treatment

Your chemotherapy regimen is made especially for you by our Mercy pharmacist. Your lab work is used to determine your dosing for that day. Treatment is started after lab work is reviewed by a health care practitioner, including a doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

Before your appointment: Eat breakfast/lunch and take your medicines as you normally do. Bring any medicines you might need to take while you are here. These might include insulin, pain medicines and others.

Arrive at the oncology clinic at _____

- Check in with the receptionist in the main lobby of the Mercy Michael Berry Clinic.
- Please use the Mercy Cancer Resource Center to lower your risk of infection from others in the main waiting area. Feel free to use the computer, books, cards and puzzles while you are here.

Labs:

- You will have labs drawn by an oncology nurse at _____
- You do not need labs drawn this day.

Appointments:

- Your appointment with Dr. _____ is scheduled for _____.
- You will not see your oncologist this day; you will only be seen by a chemotherapy nurse. However, the chemo nurse will be able to consult with your oncologist for your questions or concerns.

Please note:

- Bring things to make you comfortable and to pass the time: books, magazines, puzzles, knitting, etc.
- We offer complimentary food and beverages, but you are welcome to bring your own.
 - Friends and family are encouraged to bring something to eat or visit Mercy Hospital's cafeteria.
- Wi-Fi is available for computers, tablets, etc.
- Cell phones are permitted and do not need to be turned off.
- Friends and family are welcome to accompany you, but keep the following recommendations in mind:
 - If they are not feeling well (especially during the cold and flu season), please have them wait in the waiting room or have someone else accompany you that day. This is for your safety as well as other patients.
 - Please keep in mind how lengthy treatment days can be when bringing small children and limit the length of their visit.

"The only courage that matters is the kind that gets you from one moment to the next."

—Mignon McLaughlin



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

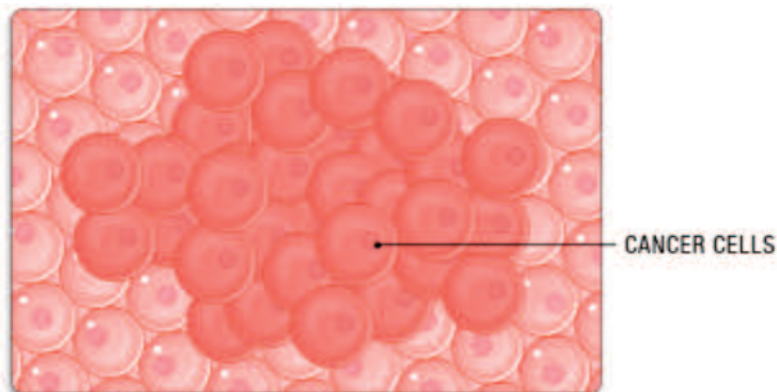


Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy (chemo) is the use of medicines to destroy cancer cells.

What is cancer exactly?

Our bodies are made of billions of cells. Normally, cells grow, divide and eventually die. As old cells die off, they're replaced by new ones. But cancer happens when abnormal cells grow, divide and don't die when they should. Instead, they keep dividing and multiplying, and a tumor may form.



This can happen in many different places in the body. And wherever cancer first develops, that's what type of cancer you have. For example, cancer that starts in the lungs is lung cancer. But sometimes cancer cells metastasize, meaning that they spread into other parts of the body. So first, your doctor will figure out what type of cancer you have and whether it has spread. Then it's time to plan your treatment.

Planning your treatment

The first step is to talk to your doctor about the best plan for you. Of course, your doctor might be a man or a woman, but here we will refer to your doctor as she.

Each person's treatment is different. Even if two people have the same type of cancer, they may not be treated the same way.

Cancer treatment depends on many different things, like:

- The type of cancer
- If the cancer has spread
- Your age and general health
- What side effects the treatment might cause
- Current standard of treatment (what's been found to work best in a certain situation)
- If you join a clinical trial
- The goal of treatment

Clinical trial

This is a research study to find new ways to treat cancer. Your doctor will tell you if a clinical trial is available, and then go over the pros and cons of taking part in one.



Treatment goals

Sometimes the goal is to cure the cancer. Your cancer is considered cured if there are no signs of cancer in your body when treatment ends, and the cancer doesn't come back.

Other times, the goal is to control the cancer for a period of time. This means the cancer is still there, but it grows more slowly. The treatment plan might include relieving pain or other problems caused by the cancer.

Treatment depends on your goal

You are always in charge. This is your decision—not your doctor's and not your family's. You can choose to have treatment or not to have treatment. If this is something you're thinking about, talk to your doctor.

How chemotherapy works

Cancer cells multiply because they continue to divide instead of dying off. Chemotherapy targets and destroys cells that are dividing. Chemo is very effective against cells that divide a lot, like cancer cells.

Chemotherapy can travel through your bloodstream to almost anywhere in your body. It can kill cancer cells that have spread to other areas. This is a little different than other kinds of treatment, such as surgery or radiation.

Other treatments

Surgery can be used to remove a tumor. Radiation therapy uses a beam of energy to destroy cancer cells. Both surgery and radiation only treat cancer in one place, not the whole body.

You might just have chemotherapy or a combination of treatments that works together. It depends on your situation. And if you have a combination, the order of these treatments is important.

Neoadjuvant and adjuvant chemotherapy

- Neoadjuvant means chemotherapy is used *before* surgery to shrink a tumor before it's removed.
- Adjuvant means chemotherapy is *after* surgery or radiation to destroy any cancer cells that have spread or been left behind. Adjuvant chemo also helps keep the cancer from coming back.

Your treatment team

No matter what kind of treatment you have, you'll have many different people caring for you, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, counselors and social workers. You can and should go to any one of them with your questions or concerns.

If you plan on having children

Talk to your doctor about how chemo might affect your ability to have children. For both men and women, there is a risk you won't be able to have children after treatment. But there might be things you can do before treatment starts to preserve this ability. Be sure to discuss this with your doctor.

*"Once you choose hope, anything's possible."
—Christopher Reeve*



Getting chemotherapy

There are many different chemotherapy medicines

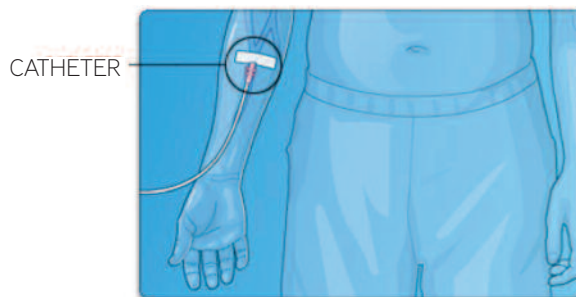
You may get just one drug, or you may get a combination. Either way, the medicines are given (administered) in a few different ways.

- You might get a pill or a liquid to swallow
- Some are given as a shot or through an IV line (sometimes called infusion)
- They may be creams or lotions you rub on your skin

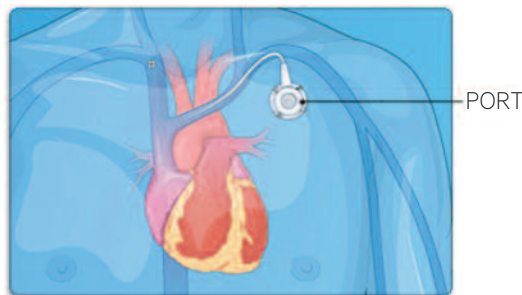
With some of these treatments, you may be giving the medicines to yourself. If so, it's very important to understand how and when to take them.

IV chemotherapy

Usually, chemo is given at a hospital or clinic using an IV line. With this, the medicine from the IV line often goes through a catheter (small tube) that's placed in a vein in your hand or arm. The catheter is very small, so it's put in and taken out each time you come in for treatment. The medicine goes right into a vein and into your bloodstream. It can travel throughout your body very quickly.



Sometimes, instead of a catheter, a port is placed in a large vein in your chest, neck or arm. This port stays in your body until you're completely done with chemotherapy. That way, a catheter doesn't have to be placed every time you come in.



If you're getting chemo through an IV, your doctor or nurse can give you the specifics about your treatment. In fact, it's a good idea to ask them exactly what to expect on treatment days, like where to go and what to bring. That way, you'll be more comfortable on your first day.



Chemotherapy cycles

Once you know what kind of chemotherapy you're getting, your doctor will set up a schedule of chemotherapy cycles. A cycle is a certain number of treatment days followed by a rest period. For example, a chemo cycle might be one day of treatment, then two weeks of rest. After that, the same cycle repeats.

Chemotherapy can lower your blood cell levels

Chemotherapy attacks cells that are dividing. That's how it destroys cancer cells, which divide often. But there are many healthy cells in your body that normally divide a lot. Some important ones include white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets. Chemo can lower your levels of these cells, and this may cause problems.

- White blood cells help fight off germs. When they're low, you're at risk of getting an infection.
- Red blood cells carry oxygen to all parts of your body. When you don't have enough of them, you might feel tired, weak or short of breath.
- Platelets help your blood clot. Low platelet levels mean you might bleed more than usual from cuts or other injuries.



WHITE BLOOD CELLS



RED BLOOD CELLS



PLATELETS

You'll probably have regular blood tests to check your blood cell levels. In fact, it's common to have these tests each time you come for treatment. If any of your levels are low, your treatment may be delayed to let your body recover, or your doctor may give you medicines to take.

Other tests

From time to time, your doctor will look for signs of cancer in your body to see how well chemotherapy is working. She might:

- Do a physical exam
- Order imaging tests like an x-ray, MRI, CT scan or PET scan
- Test your blood or tissue samples for signs of cancer

Depending on your test results, you might continue your treatment as is, or your doctor might want to make a change.

Staying organized can make keeping up with treatments and tests easier

- Use a calendar to keep track of your treatments and tests.
- Get a folder or binder to store your papers or documents.
- Keep a list of your chemo drugs and any other medicines you take. Include the names and doses; if you're not sure, just ask.
- Keep notes from your appointments and a list of questions for next time.
- Write down important phone numbers:
 - Doctors
 - Insurance representative
 - Hospital
 - Emergency contact
 - Clinic
- Keep copies of your test results and bills or insurance documents you get.

You want everything in one place so you don't have to worry about finding it when you need it. That will make dealing with any problems or questions a lot less stressful.



Life during treatment

Working during treatment

- Some people can continue working as usual.
- Others need to work fewer hours or take time off.
- It depends on what you do and how you feel. Your doctor can give you an idea of what you'll be up for.

Daily activities

You'll probably be able to do many of your daily activities. However, this is a time to focus on you and your health. Take things day to day. If you're not feeling up to something, don't do it. And don't be afraid to ask your family and friends for help. If you're not feeling well, see if someone can go grocery shopping or do the laundry for you. It's important to take care of yourself while you're dealing with all this.

Emotional concerns

It's completely normal to have a lot of different emotions while getting treatment. You may feel:

- Scared
- Really worried
- Angry this is happening
- Sad or depressed

Some people are so worried they can't sleep for days at a time. This can affect your treatment. These emotional challenges are NOT something you have to live with, so speak up if you start to feel this way. We have counselors, psychologists and social workers who can help you.

It's also important to be open with your family and friends about how you're feeling. After all, this can be hard on them, too. They may not know what to say, or they may be afraid they'll say the wrong thing. When everyone is open and honest about how they're feeling, it makes things a lot easier.

Support groups

There are many support groups out there, both in person and online. Even if you don't think of yourself as the support group type, talking to people going through the same things can make you feel a lot better. They can also be a great source of information about cancer treatment. Just remember that not everything you read online is right for your situation. So ask your doctor or nurse what websites might be good for you.

Weight changes and nutrition

Some people lose weight and others gain. Either way, you need to focus on your health and building your strength.

- Be sure to include protein in your meals. Lean meats and low-fat dairy are good choices.
- Try to eat five or six smaller meals through the day. That's easier on your stomach.
- Choose higher-calorie foods so you can eat smaller amounts and still get enough to keep you going.



Vitamins, supplements and other medicines

Make sure your doctor knows about everything you take. And talk to your doctor before you start or stop taking any medicines or supplements. Some of them can affect how well your chemo works. These include:

- All prescription medicines
- Anything you get over-the-counter, like aspirin, decongestants or antacids
- Any herbal supplements
- All vitamins, especially antioxidants like vitamins A, C and E
- Recreational drugs
- Alcohol

“Chemo brain”

You may have heard that some people have trouble concentrating or remembering things during chemotherapy. You may even hear this called chemo brain. Some people notice this while others have no problem at all.

Of course, with all you have to deal with, it’s pretty normal to forget things from time to time. But if you have any concerns, tell your doctor.

Your sex life during chemo

Most of the time, it’s fine to have sex during treatment. But check with your doctor first. Chemotherapy might or might not affect your interest in sex. It’s different for everyone.

Chemotherapy is NOT birth control

It is possible for a woman to get pregnant during treatment, and a man can still get a woman pregnant. But pregnancy is not safe when you’re on chemo. Chemo medicines can be very dangerous to the developing baby, so it’s important to use birth control during and after treatment. Your doctor can tell you when it’s safe to stop using it.

If you are pregnant or breastfeed

It is possible to have chemo when you are pregnant. But because it can be dangerous, you and your doctor have to decide. And if you breastfeed, you might have to stop during treatment. Ask your doctor.

*“Courage is being afraid, but going on anyhow.”
—Dan Rather*



Common concerns

Many people have ideas about what it's like to get chemo before they start. They might think all chemo patients lose their hair and feel really sick. But this is not true for many patients.

Your side effects

Different medicines cause different side effects—and everyone reacts to medicines differently. Your experience won't be like anyone else's. Even if a side effect is common, you might not have a problem with it, or it might be milder for you. That doesn't mean your chemo isn't working. It's just the way your body reacts to it. Your doctor can tell you what you might be able to expect.

Why side effects happen

Most side effects happen because of the way medicines work. Chemo attacks cells that are dividing. Cancer cells divide faster than other cells, but some healthy cells also normally divide more often than others. For example, your hair, skin, intestines, mouth and bone marrow all have cells that divide a lot. So some chemo medicines might affect these areas.

Don't try to tough it out. It is important to talk to your care team about any side effects you feel. Most of the time, your team can help you feel better. In fact, your doctor will give you a list of things to call about, so make sure you have it handy. But if something just doesn't feel right, please call, even if it's not on the list.

Hair loss

Many drugs do NOT cause hair loss and not all chemo patients lose their hair. Ask your doctor what you can expect. When people lose their hair, it usually starts to fall out a couple weeks after the first treatment. In time, they might have anything from thinning hair to complete baldness. With some drugs, people lose hair all over their body, not just on their head.

If your doctor says you might lose some hair, it's a good idea to be gentle with it.

- Don't use hair dyes
- Don't get a perm
- Don't use hot rollers or curling irons
- Air dry your hair when you can, or blow dry it on low

Hair loss is almost always temporary. Hair usually starts to grow back four to six weeks after treatment stops. Most of the time, hair grows back at the same speed it did before chemo. Many people can stop wearing a wig or head covering within six months after treatment ends. The new hair may be a different shade or texture when it first grows back. But for most people, it's back to normal within a few months.



Planning for possible hair loss

Think about whether you'll want to wear a wig, scarf or another type of head covering. In some cases, wigs are covered by insurance. Your hospital social worker can give you information about free programs. It's easier to plan for this ahead of time, so please ask.

To make things easier, many people decide to cut their hair short or shave it off once it starts to fall out. That's up to you.

While some people aren't that bothered by hair loss, it can be upsetting for others. If you're worried about losing your hair, speak up. Your care team can make sure you've got the support you need.

If you do lose your hair, it's important to protect your scalp.

- Cover your head with a hat or scarf outdoors in cold weather.
- Use sunscreen or a hat to protect your scalp from the sun.
- If a wig irritates your scalp, try a cotton scarf or head covering instead.

Feeling sick to your stomach

Many chemo drugs don't cause this at all. But if you do feel sick, your doctor can give you other medicines to help. Tell your doctor or nurse right away if:

- You feel nauseous (sick to your stomach)
- You're throwing up
- You have diarrhea, or your poop is very soft for more than a day or two
- You feel constipated (it's difficult or painful to poop)

Ways to help prevent stomach problems

- Stay away from anything with a strong smell (for example, food, perfume, cigarettes, etc.).
- Don't eat large meals.
- Avoid foods with really strong tastes.
- Eat foods that are cold or room temperature. They don't have as strong a smell.
- Distract yourself by talking to friends, watching TV or doing something you enjoy.
Taking your mind off your stomach can actually help.
- Eat slowly and chew your food well.
- Don't drink liquids with your meal. Instead, drink them at least an hour before or after eating.
- Try eating dry foods like cereal, toast or crackers before you get out of bed in the morning.
This can help with morning nausea.
- Suck on ice cubes, mints or hard candies.
- Try not to lie flat for at least 2 hours after eating.
- Breathe slowly and deeply if you start to feel sick.

*"Each day comes bearing its own gifts. Untie the ribbons."
—Ruth Ann Schabacker*



Possible side effects

White blood cells

Chemotherapy can lower your blood cell levels. If your white blood cell levels get really low, your body can't protect you from infections. If this happens, your doctor may need to adjust the amount of chemotherapy you're getting, or she may prescribe other medicines to take along with the chemo. If you get an infection, even a mild one, you may need to delay treatment until it clears up.

Even if your white blood cell level is OK, you still need to protect yourself from infections.

- Most importantly, wash your hands a lot, especially before eating and anytime you've been in public or near someone who's sick. It's easy to do and really can keep you healthy.
- Do your best to avoid people who are sick (anyone who's sneezing, coughing or obviously has a cold).
- Ask your doctor if you should get a flu shot.

If you ever get a fever, call your doctor right away. She may need to treat this immediately.

Red blood cells

If your red blood cells drop, you may get something called anemia. This can make you feel:

- Very tired and weak
- Short of breath
- Dizzy
- Like your heart is racing

If your red blood cells are low, your doctor may adjust your treatment. In some cases, a blood transfusion may be needed.

Platelets

Your doctor will also watch your platelet level. Platelets help your blood clot. If your levels get very low, you may bleed more easily from even small cuts or injuries. Your chemo may have to be adjusted or delayed until your platelet count recovers.

Fatigue

Some people on chemo say they suddenly start to feel tired in their whole body, and it doesn't go away, even with sleep. This is called fatigue. Not everyone feels this way, but if you do, tell your care team. If they can find what's causing your fatigue, they might be able to help.

Causes of fatigue:

- A medical condition
- Having more than one type of treatment
- Not eating right
- Medicines you're taking
- Pain you might feel
- If you're stressed out or depressed

Many of these things can be treated. But in some cases, doctors just don't know what's causing the fatigue.



What you can do if you start to feel fatigued

- Think of your energy level like a battery: if you use a lot of energy running errands all day, later on you'll need to rest at home for a little while to recharge. This means you should plan ahead to make sure your energy level stays balanced.
- Keep a notebook with you for a few days and write down when you feel the most energized or the most tired. If you see a pattern, you can schedule activities for the time of day you feel the best.
- Plan short rests a couple times a day. And if you've got a big activity, rest up beforehand.
- Getting regular exercise can actually help you feel more energized. Just don't overdo it. Avoid anything that makes you sore or really out of breath. A walk or a short bike ride a couple days a week might help you feel better. Your doctor can tell you what kind of exercise is OK for you.
- Stress can make you feel more tired. Don't try to take on too much. Tell your family and friends how you're feeling, so they understand why you might not be up for certain things.

Keep your mouth as healthy as possible

Let your dentist know you're having chemo. In fact, it's a good idea to see your dentist a couple of weeks before you start. Ask him about getting checkups throughout treatment. That way he can help keep an eye out for any problems. What to watch for:

- Your mouth might feel really dry.
- You might have pain on the inside of your mouth or gums.
- You might get an infection. This can look like white patches in your mouth.

Once treatment starts:

- Brush your teeth with an extra-soft toothbrush after every meal and before you go to bed.
- Check your mouth every day for sores or anything else that looks different.
- Drink lots of fluids to keep your mouth moist.
- Ask your doctor or dentist if it's OK to floss.

You can use a mouth rinse to keep your mouth clean

Regular rinses might be too irritating. Your doctor can prescribe one, especially if you have pain or an infection. You can also make your own: mix 1 teaspoon of salt and 1 teaspoon of baking soda with 1 quart of warm water. Swish some in your mouth for a minute and spit it out.

If your mouth does get sore:

- Stick to soft foods like mashed potatoes or scrambled eggs.
- Stay away from spicy foods or anything with a lot of acid in it, like orange juice or tomato sauce.
- Call your doctor or dentist so they can help you feel better.

Numbness or tingling in the fingers and toes

Sometimes, people on chemo have numbness or tingling in their fingers or toes. These feelings might start out mild and get worse after more treatments. Tell your doctor right away so she can take care of it.

*"Courage is the power to let go of the familiar."
—Raymond Lindquist*



Review

You're not going through this alone. There's always someone on your care team who can answer your questions or talk over any concerns. Also, be open with your family and friends about how you're feeling. Don't be afraid to ask them for help.

It's common to feel scared, angry or really sad about what's going on. Speak up about how you're feeling so your team can help.

If you feel bad, don't assume this is just something you have to put up with. You may not be sure what's a serious problem and what's not, especially in the beginning. Let your team know.

Chemotherapy is a lot to deal with, but understanding what's involved can help put your mind more at ease.

*"Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one."
— Jane Howard*



Mercy Health System offers this chemotherapy summary provided by Emmi® and the American Cancer Society to help you understand your treatment and what to expect.

You may share the following link with your friends and family as well:

<https://www.my-emmi.com/acs/cancer-education.html>

DISCLAIMER: This Emmi® program is for your information and education only. Using this program does not take the place of conversations between you and your health care provider. This program gives general information about how some health problems may be treated. This information is extra education in addition to your appointments with your health care provider. This Emmi program is meant to educate you about medical conditions and/or surgical procedures, but it does not cover everything. This program may go over the most common possible risks and complications of medical treatments or surgical procedures. But there may be other problems, known and unknown, that can happen after treatment or surgery. No guarantees or warranties are made about the treatment or surgery itself. This Emmi program is not meant to give exact medical or surgical advice to anyone. And it does not replace the informed consent process you will go through with your health care provider. Please talk with your health care provider about any questions or concerns you have about the information in this program. Also talk with your health care provider in person about what kinds of problems you may have if you do not have this treatment. This Emmi program is not meant to give exact medical or surgical advice to anyone. And it does not replace the informed consent process you will go through with your health care provider. Please talk with your health care provider about any questions or concerns you have about the information in this program. Also talk with your health care provider in person about what kinds of problems you may have if you do not have this treatment. ©2009, Emmi Solutions, LLC. All rights reserved.



Neutropenia guidelines

Neutropenia = low white blood cell count

White blood cell (WBC) function: fight infection, regulate immune system

Normal white blood cell count: 4,500-11,000 m/l

Absolute neutrophil count (ANC) = a measure used to determine the body's ability to fight infection. The ANC is calculated by taking the total number of WBC multiplied by the percent of WBC that are segmented (segs) and banded (bands) neutrophils.

ANC greater than 1,500 = normal risk of infection

ANC less than 1,000 = greater risk of infection (neutropenia)

ANC less than 500 = severe risk of infection (severe neutropenia)

Infection

It is important to know that, while on chemo, your body is more prone to infection. Many of the drugs used in chemo to fight cancer cells can also harm healthy cells, including white blood cells, the cells that fight infection. Part of staying healthy and strong during treatment involves taking extra precautions to prevent infection.

Potential symptoms of infection

Call your oncologist if you have

ANY of these symptoms:

- Fever (temperature of 100.4° F or above)
- Chills
- Severe cough
- Sore throat
- Sinus pain or pressure
- Earaches or headaches
- Frequent urination/burning during urination
- Diarrhea
- Mouth sores
- Redness or swelling of any area around a wound, pimple, sore, etc.
- Dizziness or weakness

Self-care guidelines

- Perform good and frequent handwashing, especially before and after eating, after restroom use and after handling money. Good handwashing is the best way to prevent infection.
- Avoid people who are ill.
- Avoid salad bars and buffets
- Cook all foods thoroughly.
- No raw eggs or raw fish/shellfish.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables must be washed and peeled for 30 to 60 seconds under running water before eating. This includes thick-skinned fruits like bananas and oranges.
- Do not garden or re-pot plants without gloves.
- Do not clean pets or touch their feces/droppings.
- Wash hands after touching pets. Do not clean cat litter boxes, turtle, fish tanks and bird cages.
- Report exposure to chicken pox, other diseases and live vaccines (e.g., oral polio vaccine) immediately to your oncologist.
- Do not eat sprouts of any kind.
- Do not order salads when dining out as they may not be properly washed.
- Do not drink well water unless tested yearly for bacteria and found to be safe.
- Do not use herbal or other supplements unless approved by your oncologist.
- Wash your hands well prior to, during and after food preparation and handling.
- Throw away refrigerated leftovers after two days.

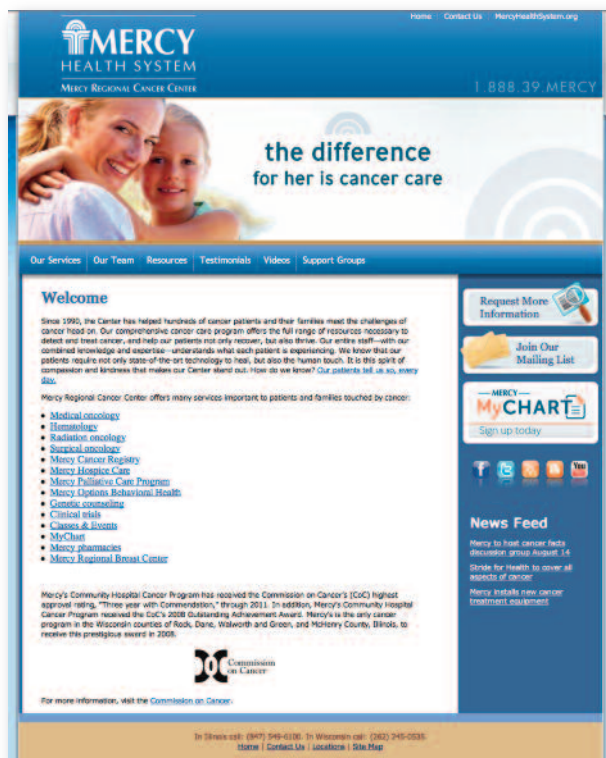


Visit Mercy's comprehensive cancer care website:

Cancer.MercyHealthSystem.org

Our website has the most up-to-date links and resources for all your cancer care needs:

- Diagnosis
- Treatment
- Diet/nutrition
- Support groups
- Testimonials
- Instructional videos
- And more



*"I have heard there are troubles of more than one kind.
Some come from ahead and some come from behind.
But I've bought a big bat. I'm all ready you see.
Now my troubles are going to have troubles with me!"
—Dr. Seuss*



Mercy Health System resources

Please put the Welcome Folder you received during your first visit to the Mercy hematology/oncology clinic in this section for quick reference.

*"The human spirit is stronger than anything that can happen to it."
—C.C. Scott*

