

Clemenceau Medical Center offers free program to help you and your loved ones understand and manage the physical, emotional and spiritual challenges of cancer.

Chemotherapy Is an Individual Experience

Every person experiences chemotherapy differently, both physically and emotionally. Each person experiences side effects from chemotherapy differently, and different chemotherapy drugs cause different side effects. Fortunately, as the science of cancer treatment has advanced, so has the science of managing treatment side effects. Whatever you experience, remember there is no relationship between how the chemotherapy makes you feel and whether you derive benefit from it.

Many people feel fine for the first few hours following chemotherapy. Usually, some reaction occurs about four to six hours later. However, some people don't react until 12 or even 24 to 48 hours after treatment. Some people experience almost all of the side effects described below, while others experience almost none.

We have many treatments to help you deal with side effects. Please let us know how you are feeling, so that we can address your concerns and help make you more comfortable.

Your well-being is very important to us. There is a delicate balance between the benefits of chemotherapy and the harm of possible side effects. Please tell your doctor if you feel that the harm outweighs the benefit.

What to Expect When Having Chemotherapy

It is normal to feel worried or overwhelmed when you find out that you will receive chemotherapy. The information in this brochure can help you prepare for your first treatment.

Before you start chemotherapy

Meeting with your oncologist. Before you start chemotherapy, you will meet with your medical oncologist. He or she will review your medical records and do a physical examination. You will also have tests done to help plan treatment. Your exact treatment depends on:

- The type, size, and location of the cancer.
- Your age.
- Your general health.
- Other factors that are different for each person.

Most chemotherapy treatments are given in repeating cycles. The length of a cycle depends on the treatment being given. Most cycles range from 2 to 6 weeks. The number of treatment doses scheduled within each cycle also varies depending on the drugs being given.

For example, each cycle may contain only 1 treatment on the first day. Or, a cycle may contain more than 1 dose given weekly or daily. After completing 2 cycles, a re-evaluation is often done to make sure the treatment is working. Most people have several cycles of chemotherapy. Or the treatment cycles may continue for as long as the chemotherapy works well.

Giving permission for chemotherapy. Your doctor will talk with you about the risks and benefits of chemotherapy. If you choose to have it, your team will ask you to sign an informed consent form. Signing the informed consent form means:

- You give written permission for treatment.
- Your team gave you information on your treatment options.
- You choose to have chemotherapy.
- You understand that the treatment is not guaranteed to give the intended results.

Eating food and taking medicines with chemotherapy. Your team will tell you what to eat, drink, or avoid on chemotherapy days so the treatment will work best.

Tell your doctor about any prescription and non-prescription medicines you take. This includes vitamins and other supplements, such as herbs.

Planning for your chemotherapy treatments

Chemotherapy can be given through a needle into a vein. This is called intravenous or IV chemotherapy. It can also be available through pills that you take by mouth. This is called oral chemotherapy.

During treatment

What happens on your first day of IV chemotherapy

You may want to bring a friend or family member on your first day of treatment. This person can support you and help you remember information. You may also bring items, DVDs, books, or a blanket, to make your treatment time more comfortable.

Before your IV chemotherapy starts, you will:

- Meet the nurse or other health professionals who will give it
- Have a short physical exam to check your blood pressure, pulse, breathing, and temperature.
- Have your height and weight measured to find the right doses of chemotherapy.
- Have a blood sample taken.
- Meet with your oncologist. He or she will check your health and the results of your blood tests and order the chemotherapy.

Giving chemotherapy with a port

Before your first appointment, you might have minor surgery to put **Implantable port or port-a-cath**. This is a round metal or plastic disk that the IV goes in during treatment.

How long does IV chemotherapy take?

Your IV chemotherapy can take minutes, hours, or several days if you have continuous infusion chemotherapy. The nurse will give you medication to prevent side effects such as nausea or possible allergic reactions. Then you get your chemotherapy medications. To get the full benefit of chemotherapy, it is important to follow the **schedule of treatments recommended by your doctor**.

After your IV chemotherapy

After your treatment is finished, the nurse or another team member will take out your IV. If you have a port, it will stay until you finish all of your treatments. The nurse will check your blood pressure, pulse, breathing, and temperature again.

Your oncologist or nurse will also talk with you again about side effects. They will give you medication, tips to manage side effects, and other tips. These may include:

- Avoiding being around people with colds or other infections. Chemotherapy weakens your body's immune system, which helps fight infections.
- Drinking lots of fluids for 48 hours after chemotherapy. This helps move the drugs through your body.
- Making sure to get rid of all your body fluids and waste after chemo therapy. For example, flush the toilet twice after using it. This is important because the medication stays in your body for about 48 hours after treatment. It could harm healthy people in your home. Body fluids and waste include urine, bowel movements, vomit, semen, and fluid from the vagina.

Your medical team can tell you what activities to do or avoid on treatment days.

For any questions or clarifications do not hesitate to contact your doctor or call Chemotherapy unit at 01/372888 ext.:1801 during working hours or Emergency department ext.:1900-1911

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Coping with Chemotherapy

What you need to know

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