

Chemotherapy Introduction

For patients and families preparing to receive chemotherapy at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre



Resources for this Session

- Video slides
- Two booklets:
 - Preparing for Your Chemotherapy Treatment
 - Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy
- Patient Education Calendar has information on for face-to-face session held at the Princess Margaret



Class Overview

- What is Chemotherapy?
- Side Effects and Safety
- Tips to help you and Your Family
- What to Expect During Treatment

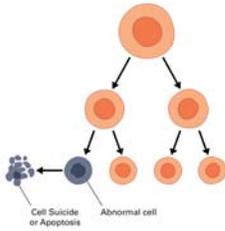


What is Chemotherapy?



What is Cancer?

Normal cell division

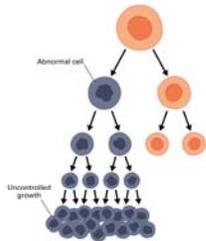


- **Normal cells** grow and divide in a controlled way.



What is Cancer?

Cancer cell division



- **Cancer cells** are abnormal cells that continue to grow without control.



How is Cancer Treated?

- Surgery
- Radiation
- **Chemotherapy**
- Hormonal Therapy
- Immunotherapy
- Vaccine
- Supportive Care



What is Chemotherapy?

- Chemotherapy is a medicine that destroys cancer cells to prevent their growth and spread
- Can be given by mouth, directly into the vein (IV) or into the skin.
- Can be taken at home or at the hospital



What is Chemotherapy?

- Chemotherapy destroys cancer cells, but it also affects normal cells
- Normal cells most commonly affected are blood cells, cells in the gut, mouth and hair follicles
- Damage to normal cells is the reason for many of the side effects



Side Effects and Safety

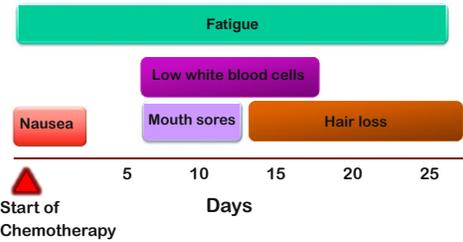


Common Side Effects

- Low blood counts -White blood cells (WBC)
 -Platelets
 -Red blood cells (RBC)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea and constipation
- Mouth sores
- Fatigue
- Hair loss
- Skin and nail changes



When to Expect Common Side Effects



Start of Chemotherapy Days



Blood Counts

- You have 3 kinds of blood cells:
 - White Blood Cells: help fight infection
 - Platelets: help form blood clots
 - Red Blood Cells: carry oxygen to your tissues



Low White Blood Cell Count (Neutropenia)

- Wash your hands often
- Avoid large crowds or anyone who is ill
- Wash cuts and scrapes with soap and water right away
- Take your temperature if you feel chills or feverish
- Know the signs of an infection

See page 4 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy booklet



Know the Signs of an Infection

- Fever of more than 38°C or 100.4°F
- Loose bowel movements with a fever
- Chills/sweating
- Burning or frequent urination
- Severe cough, sore throat or mouth sores
- An open area that appears red or swollen

If you experience any of these symptoms, call your doctor or go to your nearest emergency department right away



Low Platelet Count

- Use a soft tooth brush and electric razor
- Avoid activities that may cause injury
- **Do not** take the following without speaking to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist:
 - Aspirin or ibuprofen (like Advil, Motrin)
 - Any new medications (including herbal or traditional)



If you have any unusual bleeding, call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency department right away

See page 6 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy booklet



Low Red Blood Counts

- Low red blood cell count can make you feel tired
- Save your energy: pace yourself, take naps
- Eat a well balanced diet



If you feel dizzy, short of breath, headaches or ringing in the ears, call your doctor or go to your local emergency department right away.

See page 6 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy Booklet



Diarrhea and Constipation

Diarrhea

- Rest and drink lots of fluids
- Avoid natural laxatives such as prunes, rhubarb and papaya

Constipation

- Ask your doctor about stool softeners and laxatives
- Stay active and drink lots of fluids
- Eat more high fiber foods (whole grain breads, fruit and vegetables)

See pages 13 and 15 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy Booklet



Mouth Sores (Mucositis)

- Symptoms may include:
 - Soreness
 - Redness
 - White patches in mouth/tongue
 - Fever
 - Dryness
- Prevent mouth sores with good mouth care
- Use baking soda mouth rinse
- Tell your nurse if you have mouth sores

See page 16 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy Booklet



Hair Loss

- Caused by some, not all chemotherapy
- Temporary hair loss can happen anywhere on the body (eyebrows, face, pubic area)
- Get a short hair cut and choose a wig before your hair falls out
- Use mild shampoo and be gentle with your hair
- Visit the Wig Salon or attend "Look Good Feel Better" at the Princess Margaret

See page 19 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy Booklet



Skin & Nail Changes

- Skin may become red, dry, itchy or flaky
- Finger and toe nails may become darker, yellow, brittle or cracked
- Bathe in warm water (not hot water)
- Use alcohol-free soaps, creams and lotions that are made for sensitive skin
- Tell you nurse if you notice any changes

See page 20 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy Booklet



Fatigue

- Feeling tired or a lack of energy that does not go away with sleep or rest
- Pace yourself, know your limits
- Rest often during the day, but leave long sleep for night time
- Try light exercise, like walking
- Tell your doctor or nurse if and how fatigue is affecting you

See page 9 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy booklet



Nausea and Vomiting

- Can happen before, during and after treatment
- Take your anti-nausea and anti-vomiting medication as prescribed
- Keep track of when it happens and tell your nurse at your next visit



If you can't stop vomiting or keep liquids down for more than 24 hours after your treatment, call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency department right away

See page 11 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy Booklet



Safe Handling of Chemotherapy at Home

- Keep each medication inside its packaging
- Follow pharmacy's instruction on proper storage
- Keep medication out of reach from children and pets
- Do not split or crush chemotherapy pill
- If you forget to take your pill on time, do not make up for the missed dose. Call your doctor or nurse.



Tips to Help You and Your Family



Coping with Emotions: For Patients and Families

- You may feel some or all of these emotions:
 - Anger
 - Sadness
 - Fear
 - Anxiety
 - Sense of loneliness
 - Feeling helpless
- Emotions are normal and a natural part of living. We all have our own ways of coping
- Remember: you are a person not just a cancer patient or a person caring for a loved one with cancer



Intimacy & Sexuality

- Your desire for intimacy and sexuality may be affected by physical and emotional change
- Sexual activity may be continued during treatment
- If you or your partner are able to become pregnant, you must use birth control

See page 20 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy booklet



Reproductive Changes

- Chemotherapy can cause fertility changes in both men and women
- Couples or individuals may want to discuss sperm or embryo banking before treatment starts

See page 23 of Managing the Side Effects of Chemotherapy booklet



Family Members: How You Can Take Care of Yourself

- Talk about feelings and frustrations with family, friends and support groups
- Be easy on yourself and take breaks
- Make sure you get enough sleep, eat well and exercise regularly
- Ask for help



Family Members: How You Can Help

- Go with your loved-one to their appointment
- Keep surfaces clean
- Wash your hands
- Make quick/easy meals
- Tell a joke and laugh
- Listen and be supportive
- Allow for silence
- Encourage relaxation



What to Expect During Treatment



Hospital Appointments

- You will have two kinds of appointments related to your chemotherapy:
 - Doctor visits
 - Treatment visits



Prepare for your Treatment Appointment

- You need to have your blood work done 1-2 days before your chemo
- Check your patient appointment itinerary to know when you should have your blood work done. This will be given to you before you leave the clinic
- You can have your blood work done at Princess Margaret or at a community lab



Why do you need blood work before every chemo appointment?

- You need blood work done before every chemo appointment to make sure it is safe for you to have your chemo.
- If your blood counts are too high or too low, it may not be safe for you to get your treatment



What to Expect: Doctor Appointment

During this visit you may:

- Go to the blood lab for blood work
- Be examined by your doctor
- Get a prescription (if needed) for chemotherapy and return appointment
- Have other appointments before or after your clinic visit, like treatments or other tests



What to Expect: Treatment Appointment

During this visit you will:

- Check-in to the Chemotherapy Unit front desk
- Wait for chart to be cleared, drug(s) to be made, and then receive treatment



How Your Drugs are Prepared

Blood Work is done



Nurse checks blood work results and processes



Pharmacist makes the chemotherapy



You receive your treatment



What to Bring on Treatment Visits

- Your health card
- Private insurance information
- Bring all medications on your first day of treatment, then only what you need to take on other treatment days
- Book, iPod, laptop (wireless Internet)
- 1 family member or friend
- Snacks or food
- Money for parking



Your Health Care Team

- Oncologists (Doctors)
- Registered Nurses
- Pharmacists
- Psychosocial Oncology
 - Social workers
 - Psychiatrists
 - Psychologists
 - Palliative Care Staff
- Dietitians
- Pain Control Specialists
- Radiation Therapists
- Physiotherapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Spiritual Care Providers
- Volunteers including transport services
- Community Care Access Staff
- Clerks / Receptionists
- Medication Reimbursement Specialist
- Patient Education Specialists
- You



Services and Resources

- Transportation services
- Information and about cancer and its treatment
- Hospital and community classes and support groups



Remember

- Ask questions
- Keep a journal and write down questions to ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist
- Bring someone with you to your appointments to be a second set of ears and to take notes
- Do not worry about “remembering it all”



If you have any questions about the information in this class or about your specific treatment, please **ask your doctor or nurse.**