



Side Effects from Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy often affects normal cells like bone marrow, the gastrointestinal tract and hair follicles. This is why side effects may include fatigue, infections, nausea and vomiting, hair loss and others. The side effects you might have will depend on the drugs and dosages used to treat your cancer. Your doctor will prepare you for the side effects often associated with your treatment. He may prescribe medications and other methods of relief, such as relaxation techniques, to help minimize any discomfort you might experience.

Treatment Length and Frequency

You may be treated in your doctor's office, treated in a clinic in the hospital, receive pills to take on a specific schedule at home, or receive drugs at home via an implanted pump. Your dosage schedule may last from a few weeks, to a year, with varying cycle frequency (once a week, once a month, or other intervals).

Take reading materials and/or a radio/cassette player (and headphones), to help pass the time while you are receiving treatment at the doctor's office or hospital. Treatments are followed by rest cycles to give your body time to build healthy new cells and regain strength.

Contributing to the Community's Health

Frequently people inquire as to how they may make a contribution to the community's health. We encourage you to consider Glendale Adventist Medical Center's Healthcare Foundation whenever you or your family desire to make a difference in the health of our community. For more information, please call (818) 409-8055.

Physician Referral (818)409-8100

CANCER SERVICES
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Understanding Chemotherapy

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There are a number of options for chemotherapy, each with their advantages and disadvantages.

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Health**

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Understanding Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is the use of medications to treat cancer. Depending on the type of cancer and its stage, the four main goals of chemotherapy are to cure cancer, to keep cancer from spreading, to slow the growth of cancer, or to relieve cancer symptoms.

Chemotherapy helps destroy cancer cells by stopping them from growing and multiplying. It may be used along with radiation therapy, surgery or both. More than one chemotherapy drug may be given at a time because some drugs work better together than alone. Your doctor will recommend the medications and dosage schedule appropriate for you. The decision depends on the kind of cancer you have, whether or not it has spread (metastasized) from its original site, the extent of its growth, and your general health.

How Chemotherapy is Given

Chemotherapy can be given in different ways. Some common methods are intravenous, oral, intramuscular, and intrathecal.

The *intravenous* route (IV) is a very common way to put medicine directly into a vein. A small needle is inserted into one of the veins in the lower arm. Some discomfort may be felt during insertion of the needle into the skin. The chemotherapy flows through the needle and plastic tube (catheter) into the bloodstream. Sometimes a syringe is used to “push” the chemotherapy through the tubing. This is called an *IV push* medication. When you receive chemotherapy through an IV, it is very important to tell your nurse right away if there is any redness, burning or discomfort in the IV area.

A more permanent type of catheter may be recommended to avoid repeated painful needle sticks into the vein. These permanent catheters are called central venous catheters or implanted ports.

Central venous catheters are surgically inserted into one of the large central veins in the chest and stay in place until the therapy is completed. Chemotherapy, blood and IV fluids can be given through this catheter and blood for lab tests can be drawn from this site. The tube will be capped and covered by a dressing, and your nurse will teach you how to care for the catheter to avoid infection.

An *implanted port* is round in shape and is usually surgically inserted under the skin surface on the chest wall between the neck and shoulder. To use the port, the nurse will insert a needle through the top skin surface to access the port. Chemotherapy, blood and IV fluids can be given through this port and blood can be drawn from the port. Home care is usually required only at initial insertion.

Other methods include:

- **Oral:** includes pills, capsules, or liquid taken by mouth
- **Intramuscular:** an injection into the muscle
- **Intrathecal:** for certain types of cancer that have a tendency to spread to the central nervous system; to prevent this, doctors may inject a chemotherapy medication into the spinal fluid through a spinal tap

