



Infirmary Cancer Care
INFIRMARY HEALTH

AFFILIATE OF
UAB O'NEAL
COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER

(251) 435-CARE (2273)



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PREPARING FOR CHEMOTHERAPY

Chemotherapy, often referred to as “chemo,” is the treatment of cancer with drugs that can destroy cancer cells. Chemotherapy is just one of the types of treatment for cancer. Each cancer is treated differently with different types of medications. Chemotherapy is a complex process. Medication is given in different sessions over one or more days. These sessions are grouped together and referred to as a “cycle.” Each cycle of chemotherapy is repeated at a set number days and can occur every one, two or three weeks.

You will have lab work performed and be examined by your physician or nurse practitioner prior to each chemotherapy treatment.

The length of time you will be in the clinic will depend on the medications you are prescribed.

Helpful Hints

- Only one visitor per patient is permitted in the infusion area at one time. All visitors should be over the age of 13.
- Eat lightly the day of treatment and do not skip meals.
- If necessary, try to schedule any necessary dental work before starting chemotherapy. Otherwise, it is likely you will not be permitted to have dental work done until after treatment is complete.
- Wear comfortable clothing and consider bringing a sweater with you. We provide warm blankets for your comfort.

Helpful Resources

- American Cancer Society: <http://www.cancer.org/index> or call 1-800-227-2345
- National Cancer Institute (NCI): 1-800-4-CANCER
 - Chemotherapy and You booklet
 - Eating hints



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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Should I eat before treatment?

Please eat according to your normal schedule. Do not skip any meals and take your medications as scheduled. You may find it best to eat a light meal the day of chemotherapy.

Can I drive myself to and from treatment?

Certain treatment protocols call for medications to be given that may make you tired and unsafe to drive. Until you know how your chemo will affect you, plan to have a driver accompany you. If they are unable to stay with you the entire length of your treatment, they should be accessible and flexible about your pick-up time. We will be happy to call your driver 30 minutes before you are finished to notify them that your treatment is nearing completion.

Do I need to have a family member stay with me during treatment?

If you are unable to sit or stand up from a treatment chair without assistance, a caretaker will need to remain with you for the duration of your treatment to assist you.

Is food available?

A nutrition station is available free of charge in the infusion area for patients only. We provide coffee, sodas, juices and water, along with chips and crackers. The hospital cafeteria is accessible from the cancer center. It is acceptable to bring snacks and outside food or beverages with you to the infusion clinic, but please be respectful of other patients and try not to bring in foods with strong aromas.

Is it safe to take my other medications while on chemo?

Your doctor or nurse practitioner will review your current medications before you start your treatment. If any medications need to be adjusted or discontinued, you will be notified. Otherwise, continue to take all medications as prescribed until instructed otherwise. Please notify your doctor or nurse of any new medications you are prescribed while on treatment.



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POST CHEMOTHERAPY INSTRUCTIONS

CONTACT YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING OCCUR:

- Shaking chills or fever greater than 100.4 F
 - Notify your doctor immediately if you develop a fever, do not delay
- Unusual cough, sore throat, lung congestion or shortness of breath
- Burning or discomfort when you urinate
- Redness, pain or sores in your mouth
- Nausea, vomiting or inability to eat or drink for more than 24 hours
- Diarrhea (loose, watery stools) for more than 24 hours
- Constipation (no bowel movement in 3-4 days)
- Bleeding or unusual bruising
- Pain not controlled with your current medication
- Redness, swelling, and/or drainage from your IV, PICC, or port site

We have a doctor or nurse on call 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.

Prescriptions and Side Effect Management

Nausea

You may require nausea medications for 3-5 days after chemotherapy

- Zofran (Odansetron): 8 mg tablets by mouth every 8 hours as needed
- Phenergan (Promethazine): 25 mg by mouth every 4-6 hours as needed
- Compazine (Prochlorperazine): 10 mg by mouth every 6 hours as needed
- Sancuso (Granisetron) patch: apply the night before chemo and leave on for 7 days
- Ativan (Lorazepam): dose varies, can be taken 2-3 times daily as needed
- Reglan (Metoclopramide): 5-10 mg 30 minutes prior to each meal

Mouth Sores

- Miracle (Magic) Mouthwash: 5 mL (1 teaspoon) swish and swallow every 3-4 hours as needed for mouth pain.



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Port Cream

- EMLA (lidocaine cream): apply liberally to port site 1 hour before port access by nurse. Cover with plastic dressing (Saran Wrap®).

Diarrhea

- Imodium A-D®: as directed on the package. You may take up to 8 tablets in 24 hours if needed. If diarrhea persists beyond 24 hours, notify your MD.
- Lomotil: prescription anti-diarrhea medication. Take one tablet every 4 hours as needed for diarrhea. If diarrhea persists beyond 24 hours, notify your MD.

Constipation

- Colace or Senokot S are stool softeners that can be used daily to help prevent constipation.
- Miralax is a laxative that can be used to produce a bowel movement. Take as directed on the package.

Bone pain

For patients receiving Neulasta or Neupogen:

- Claritin (Loratidine): 10 mg by mouth for 5 days beginning on the day you receive Neulasta or Neupogen.

Fatigue

- Normal exercise during the day is okay. Rest when you need to but try to limit daytime napping as it can affect your ability to rest/sleep well at night.
- Make time to stay connected with family and friends. Concentrate on activities that you enjoy most.

Mouth Care

- Schedule routine or necessary dental work before starting chemotherapy
- Use a soft bristle toothbrush
- Use alcohol-free mouthwash, toothpaste and gum
- For dry mouth, use mints, gum and lemon or lime juice added to water to increase saliva
- If mouth is sore, avoid spicy or acidic foods with rough texture
- Homemade mouth rinse: ½ tsp. each of baking soda and salt in 8oz warm water—gargle and spit

Nausea/Vomiting/Diarrhea

- It is not necessary to take anti-nausea medication before receiving chemotherapy. You will receive anti-nausea medication through your IV prior to your treatment.



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- If needed, take anti-nausea medication for 3-5 days after your treatment, or until nausea subsides.
- If needed take the "P" anti-nausea medication (Phenergan or Prochlorperazine) in the "PM" as they can cause drowsiness. You may also use it during the day, but it may make you sleepy. Try ½ dose during the day if needed.
- Zofran is non-drowsy. It may be taken every 8 hours and is good to take during the daytime if needed.
- You may alternate Zofran with Phenergan or Compazine every 4-6 hours as needed.
- Small amounts of low fiber foods (BRAT diet: Bananas, Rice, Applesauce, Toast) can decrease intestinal cramping and irritation.
- To avoid skin breakdown from diarrhea, clean with warm water and soft cloth. Protect the skin with zinc oxide or barrier cream (Desitin® etc.).

Nutrition/Appetite/Hydration

- Eat small meals every 3-4 hours while awake.
- Drink 8-10 glasses of fluid daily such as water, Gatorade, ginger ale, fruit juice, broth, popsicles, Jell-O®.
- Avoid greasy foods, fried, spicy, or gas producing foods, especially those with strong aromas.
- Light exercise (walking 20 minutes per day) is helpful to increase appetite and stamina.
- Muscle strength, tissue health and your immune system is boosted by increased protein intake (i.e. Lean meats, eggs, yogurt, cottage cheese, Ensure®, Boost®).

Preventing Infection

- Avoid contact with people who are known or suspected to be sick.
- Wash hands frequently with antibacterial soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizer products.
- Shower daily, if possible.
- Wash fruits and vegetables. Peel fruit and cook vegetables if white blood count is below normal.
- DO NOT eat sushi, raw or under cooked foods (raw seafood, raw or undercooked eggs).
- Keep fingernails short. Avoid cutting cuticles. Abstain from artificial nails during chemo.
- Wearing a face mask is not necessary unless advised by your physician.
- PICC lines MUST be cleaned and redressed WEEKLY. The insertion site should remain covered at all times. If at any point the PICC line dressing begins to come off or gets wet, notify the office so we can re-dress it quickly.
- You need to wrap your PICC line site while taking a bath to prevent it from getting wet. (Wrap site with Saran Wrap or cover with plastic bag secured with tape at top/bottom).



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CHEMOTHERAPY HOME SAFETY

Certain precautions should be taken to protect you and your caregiver from coming into contact with chemotherapy medications. Chemotherapy leaves the body through urine, stool, vomit and blood. Most chemotherapy medications are out of the body in less than 48 hours. Following these precautions will help you avoid any body fluids that may contain chemotherapy.

- Handwashing is the most important way to prevent infection. Wash your hands with warm soapy water before and after the following: preparing food, eating, going to the bathroom and touching body fluids. Antiseptic gels and lotions are encouraged when handwashing is not available.
- Use gloves to handle laundry that is soiled with body fluids that may contain chemotherapy. Wash all soiled linens or clothing separately and right away with regular soap in your washer.
- If you get chemotherapy or body fluids that may contain chemotherapy on your skin, wash the area with soap and water immediately, then dry. Call your physician if there is redness or irritation on the skin that doesn't resolve within an hour.



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INFUSION ROOM GUIDELINES

In an effort to provide comfort and safety to our patients and visitors, we ask that you observe the following:

- Visitors are limited to one visitor per patient in the treatment area. Exceptions to this are during teaching/education sessions and/or special circumstances.
- Visitors must be at least 15 years old to enter the treatment area. Exceptions to this are during teaching/education sessions and/or special circumstances.
- For your protection, pregnant women are not allowed in the infusion center, unless they are being treated.
- Yellow bins near your chair are for chemotherapy waste only. Please do not use these bins to dispose of other trash. Please do not touch these bins or place personal items on these bins.
- Recliners are reserved for patients undergoing treatment.
- Snacks and beverages are available for patients. You may also bring your own brown bag snack/lunch.
- You may bring in your favorite blanket or pillow from home.
- You may also take advantage of the opportunity to take a nap.
- Before leaving, please be sure that you make your next appointment.
- Please be courteous to other patients around you at all times.
- Please do not wear perfumes, scented lotions, body splashes, etc.

Thank you for allowing us to participate in your care. The health and wellbeing of our patients is important to us!