



CHEMOTHERAPY CENTER

Information Guide for Patients and Their Loved Ones

With you...
TO HELP YOU
UNDERSTAND
AND COPE WITH
CHEMOTHERAPY
TREATMENTS



Centre hospitalier
universitaire
de Sherbrooke

With you, for Life

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INTRODUCTION

You have just been diagnosed with cancer and will soon be undergoing chemotherapy treatments.

The disease and its treatment may have physical, psychological, social, and financial repercussions. You will likely have to make adjustments to your lifestyle and to your daily routine.

This document is intended to foster dialogue among the patient, their loved ones, and the members of their health care team. It will help you become more familiar with chemotherapy and more easily manage its side effects. This guide also includes practical advice on various aspects of day-to-day life.

Play an active role in your health care

Don't hesitate to share your questions and concerns with someone on your care team to become more knowledgeable of your situation. These people are there to support and assist you.

Some examples of questions are:

- During the weeks I undergo chemotherapy treatment may I engage in physical activity?
- What can I eat to improve my situation?
- Is undergoing chemotherapy painful?
- May I continue to take natural products?

You will find the personnel in the chemotherapy center and the care unit receptive and determined to provide you with the best possible care.

CHEMOTHERAPY

Chemotherapy is a type of cancer treatment. It attacks cancer cells almost everywhere they are found in your body. But, chemotherapy may also attack healthy cells in the body, and thus cause side effects. The healthy cells most likely to be affected are those that reproduce rapidly: cells in the blood, digestive tract, hair follicles (body hair and hair), and the reproductive system. However, these cells have the ability to reproduce within a short period of time.

Some chemotherapy medications are used on their own, but most often, several medications are given together at regular intervals. Chemotherapy may be combined with targeted therapies or with hormone therapy to attack cancer cells at different levels. Your physician will establish a chemotherapy treatment protocol that is based on your type of cancer and the stage of your disease. This protocol establishes the medications to be used, the number of treatments, and the intervals between them (ex.: once a week, once every three weeks, etc.).

Chemotherapy can be used to:

- induce the disease's remission;
- reduce the risk that the disease reappears (recurrence);
- treat metastases (cancer cells that have spread to other tissues or organs);
- slow down the disease's evolution or progression;
- relieve physical discomfort (such as pain) to enhance quality of life.

HOW WILL MY CHEMOTHERAPY BE ADMINISTERED?

The way in which the chemotherapy medication is administered varies, depending on the products used and the type of cancer.

Chemotherapy can be administered:

- orally (pills to swallow);
- subcutaneously (injections of the medication under the skin);
- intravenously (injections of the medication into the veins).

There are other methods of administration, contingent on the patient's health status.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL ADVERSE SIDE EFFECTS FOLLOWING TREATMENT?

Adverse side effects are the result of, among other things, changes to healthy cells caused by the medications.

Adverse side effects are usually:

- of short duration;
- different depending on the treatment;
- different depending on your overall state of health;
- and they progressively disappear.

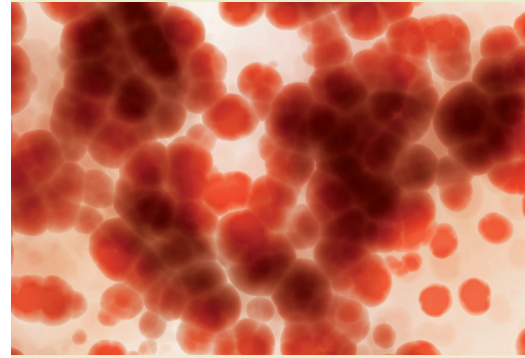


POTENTIAL ADVERSE SIDE EFFECTS

The adverse side effects likely to occur during your treatment will be explained to you by your health care team. You will be informed of the steps to take to prevent or relieve such discomforts.

This section presents information on the most prevalent adverse side effects caused by chemotherapy.

Note that you will not experience all of the adverse effects described.



Blood cells

Blood cells, including red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets, are made in bone marrow. Chemotherapy works at the level of the marrow, and may cause a decrease in the production of these blood cells. The magnitude of such a reduction varies, depending on the treatment. This reduction is monitored through blood tests. Should there be too significant a decline in the number of blood cells, changes may be made to your chemotherapy treatment.

LOW RED BLOOD CELL COUNT (ANEMIA)

Red blood cells transport oxygen throughout your body via hemoglobin (part of red blood cells). Anemia occurs when there is a low hemoglobin count. Some chemotherapy treatments can cause anemia.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF ANEMIA?

- Pale colouring (skin) and pale lips
- Lack of energy, sense of exhaustion, weakness
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Breathlessness after little effort or at rest
- Feeling of heaviness on the chest
- Increased heart rate (faster pulse)

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM ANEMIC?

- Choose and adapt your activities according to your energy level, engage in a bit of light physical exercise every day.
- Rest but try to maintain the same sleep schedule.
- Ask for help with household tasks.
- Return to your regular activities progressively, according to your capability.

LOW PLATELET COUNT (THROMBOCYTOPENIA)

Platelets play a role in blood coagulation to stop bleeding. Some chemotherapy treatments may cause the platelet count to decrease. An insufficient number of platelets in your blood will increase the risk of bleeding more easily and for longer periods of time.

MEDICATIONS

- Avoid taking medications that contain aspirin (ASA) or ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®), because these drugs thin the blood.
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) as needed. But, before taking it, make sure you don't have a fever.

WHAT SIGNS SHOULD I WATCH FOR?

- Appearance of tiny red spots (rash or petechia) or bruises (ecchymosis) on the skin
- Prolonged bleeding following a superficial cut or scratch
- Nose bleeds for no reason
- Blood in vomit, urine, or stools
- Significant increase in your menstrual flow (abnormally heavy for you)

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT INJURIES (BLEEDING) DURING THIS TIME?

- Use an electric razor rather than a razor with blades.
- Opt not to use dental floss.
- Avoid physical activities and sports that involve sudden movements.
- Apply firm pressure for 5 to 10 minutes to stop the bleeding if you have a cut, and, if possible, keep the injured part in an elevated position.

WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE A NOSEBLEED?

- Keep your head upright.
- Apply firm, continuous pressure to the nostrils, under the bridge of your nose.

If this method does not work, apply ice to the bridge of your nose and to the nape of your neck.

LOW WHITE BLOOD CELL COUNT (LEUCOPENIA)

White blood cells are immune system cells that defend the body from viruses and destroy bacteria. A number of chemotherapy treatments cause a reduction in white blood cells. A low concentration of white blood cells reduces your body's ability to destroy bacteria and to fight infections. A low white blood cell count is usually of no consequence as long as it is short lived. The number of white blood cells will gradually increase naturally between treatments.

There are several types of white blood cells, but those known as neutrophils are the most important because they serve as the first line of defence against microbes. A lack of neutrophils in the blood is called **neutropenia**. Neutropenia can last from several days to a number of weeks, depending on the type of chemotherapy you have. When this occurs, you risk developing an infection more easily.

WHAT SIGNS SHOULD I WATCH FOR?

- Fever, chills, and cold or flu symptoms
- Major diarrhea (more than three stool movements per day)
- Throat irritation, coughing, secretions
- Difficulty urinating or burning sensation when urinating, blood in the urine (reddish urine)
- Redness or swelling on the body
- Unusual pain

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO PREVENT INFECTION WHEN IN PERIOD OF NEUTROPENIA?

- Drink bottled water.
- Avoid unpasteurized products (honey, dairy products), meat, eggs, and raw fish.
- Avoid contact with people (children, in particular) who have an infection, the flu, a cold, gastroenteritis, or any other contagious disease. If this proves impossible, wash your hands often.
- Brush your teeth at least twice a day, with a soft-bristled toothbrush.
- Always check with your oncologist before receiving dental care.
- Carefully wash your hands, especially before every meal and after having used the bathroom.
- Avoid vaginal douches, enemas, having your temperature taken rectally, the use of suppositories, and vaginal and anal penetration.
- Do not use tampons during your menstrual cycle.
- Avoid contact with animal excrement (litter, stools, urine, vomit). If you must handle animal excrement, wear a mask and wash your hands immediately afterwards.

**BE
VIGILANT!**

Fever

If you have a temperature of 38 °C (100 °F) that lasts more than an hour

OR

If you have a temperature of 38.3 °C (101 °F) or higher

OR

If you have severe chills:

IT IS DANGEROUS TO STAY AT HOME; GO TO THE EMERGENCY IMMEDIATELY.

When you arrive at the emergency:

- put on a mask;
- tell the triage nurse that you are currently undergoing cancer treatment.

Do not take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) before seeing a doctor in the emergency, because these drugs can mask or lower your fever. You must be assessed by an emergency physician and have the necessary tests to screen for infection.

Nausea and vomiting

Some chemotherapy medications can cause nausea and vomiting. Nausea may occur right after the chemotherapy session or several hours or days later. Some people may experience nausea before their treatment because they are anxious or fearful of vomiting.

There are several ways to prevent or control these discomforts. Anti-nausea drugs (to manage nausea) will be prescribed to you. It is easier to prevent nausea than to treat it once it has begun. It is therefore important to take anti-nausea drugs according to the instructions given. Sometimes, several types of anti-nausea drugs must be taken to get relief.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO PREVENT NAUSEA AND VOMITING?

- Eat light meals on treatment days.
- Relax before meals.
- Air out the dining area; cooking odours can enhance nausea.
- Avoid foods that are fatty, fried, spicy, or overly sweet, those with strong odours, and those whose odour during cooking bothers you.
- Snack on dry foods like crackers, toast, and dry cereal.
- Drink plenty of liquids, but avoid drinking a lot at one time.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE IF I VOMIT?

- Rinse your mouth with water to which salt or lemon juice has been added.
- Start to eat again 30 minutes to 1 hour after vomiting.
- Start drinking liquids again gradually, increasing the amount according to your tolerance level.
- Take your anti-nausea medication again, if the vomiting occurred within the first 30 minutes after you took the medication orally.
- Inform the care team if the vomiting lasts more than 24 hours, despite having taken the prescribed medication.



Fatigue

Fatigue is the feeling of being drained. It is a temporary symptom and experiencing it does not mean that the disease has worsened or that the treatment has failed. Fatigue is frequent (but not necessarily dangerous) among patients with cancer and among those undergoing treatment. This state of fatigue changes your quality of life and your daily routine. Despite getting lots of rest, you may still feel fatigued.

WHAT CAUSES FATIGUE?

- The toxicity of the medications in the body
- Loss of appetite
- Lower red blood cell count (anemia)
- Worrying

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF FATIGUE?

- Significant lack of energy
- Inability to accomplish your daily routine
- Irritability and fluctuating emotions
- Difficulty concentrating
- Decreased efficiency and performance
- Decreased libido

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE IF I FEEL FATIGUED?

- Plan your activities in such a way as to conserve your energy; perform the least demanding tasks.
- Set reasonable goals and priorities at work and at home.
- Ask for help to do tasks that require a lot of effort or those that tire you the most.
- Avoid resting too much. Too much rest is not good for this kind of fatigue; it can even make the feeling of fatigue worse.
- Have a short nap during the day (maximum 60 minutes per day).

Mouth sores

The cells inside your mouth may be affected by the administration of chemotherapy. The first symptoms appear five (5) to fourteen (14) days after the start of treatment and may progress from inflammation of the oral mucous membranes (cheeks, tongue, and gums) to small sores in your mouth (ulcers). **It is very important to pay particular attention to caring for your mouth during treatment.**

HOMEMADE GARGLING SOLUTION

1 teaspoon of salt and
1 teaspoon of baking soda,
diluted in 2 to 4 cups of
boiled, cooled water.

Gargle 3 to 4 times a day.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO PREVENT SORES?

- Brush your teeth with a soft-bristled toothbrush after every meal and at bedtime.
- Avoid using dental floss if you experience bleeding or pain.
- Protect your lips from cracking by applying a mild lip balm or Vaseline.
- Prevent your mouth from getting dry by drinking frequently.
- Avoid alcohol-based mouthwashes.
- Gargle with the homemade solution.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE IF I GET SORES?

- Avoid foods that are very hot, acidic, spicy, or seasoned with vinegar that risk irritating your mouth.
- Choose foods that are moist, soft, and easy to chew and swallow.
- Eat icy-cold foods to soothe your ulcers.
- Avoid drinking alcohol and smoking.
- Wear well-adjusted dentures, clean them regularly, and remove them often to give your gums a rest.
- Gargle with the homemade solution.



Loss of appetite

You may lose your appetite during your treatment. This may be caused by the chemotherapy drugs or their adverse side effects. Nausea and vomiting, mouth ulcers, fatigue, stress, and anxiety may also reduce your appetite.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF LOSS OF APPETITE?

- Not feeling the need to eat
- No longer being hungry after a few bites
- Not being interested in one or more foods
- Weight loss

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE IF I HAVE NO APPETITE?

- Eat when you are hungry.
- Eat in the company of other people.
- Have several small meals every day, including nutritious snacks (rich in calories and protein, ex.: nuts or snack bars).
- Stimulate your appetite by engaging in light physical exercise before meals.
- Use commercial food supplements like Ensure® or Boost® if necessary.
- Cook in larger quantities on days when you are feeling well and freeze food in individual portions for days when you don't feel like cooking.
- Accept help with preparing meals.

If the situation persists, consulting the nutritionist may prove helpful.

Changes in taste and smell

Some chemotherapy treatments may alter your sense of taste and smell. This can make food less appetizing, and give it a more bitter, saltier, or metallic taste.



WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO MASK BAD TASTES?

- Eat foods that are cold or at room temperature to weaken odours and tastes that are too strong.
- Mask unpleasant tastes:
 - if you do not have mouth sores, eliminate any aftertaste by drinking orange or cranberry juice or lemon-flavoured water;
 - season your food (spices, sugar, salt);
 - eat candy or chew sugarless gum;
 - in the event of a metallic taste, use plastic utensils.

If the situation persists, consulting the nutritionist may prove helpful.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is the elimination of soft or liquid stools more than three times a day. It is caused by the intestine's inability to retain water. Certain chemotherapy medications irritate the intestinal mucosa and cause diarrhea.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE IF I HAVE DIARRHEA?

- Limit your consumption of fatty, fried, spicy, and overly sweet foods.
- Avoid foods that are natural laxatives, such as prunes, alcohol, and products containing caffeine.
- Choose foods that are low in fibre, such as white bread, cookies, and canned fruits and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration.
- Wash and dry the anal area after each bowel movement and apply a protective cream as needed. Ask your pharmacist which product is most suitable.

If the situation persists, consulting the nutritionist may prove helpful.

Skin changes

Certain treatments may cause changes to your skin. These changes will be temporary and occur occasionally. Some treatments administered intravenously may cause irritation and make your vein sensitive. Should this occur, inform your nurse when you arrive for your next treatment.

POTENTIAL SKIN CHANGES INCLUDE:

- Rash (pimples)
- Redness
- Itching (tingling)
- Dryness
- Change in skin colour
- Increased sensitivity to the sun and tanning lamps

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO PREVENT THESE CHANGES?

- Use an unscented body cleanser and moisturizing lotion.
- Protect your skin from the sun:
 - cover your arms and legs;
 - wear a large-brimmed hat;
 - apply sun screen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30, at all times;
 - avoid prolonged exposure to the sun.
- Refrain from swimming in water containing lots of chlorine.
- Protect your skin from heat sources (hot-water bottles, heating pads, tanning lamps).
- Refrain from rubbing and scratching the skin.



Hair loss

Some chemotherapy treatments may cause hair loss (alopecia) or make hair sparser. Some targeted therapies may cause the hair to become finer or drier. Hair loss is often temporary and usually begins two or three weeks after beginning treatment.

Hair loss may be gradual, sudden, or in clumps. The scalp is often sensitive to touch. Hair usually grows back six to eight weeks after the end of treatment. It may, however, have a slightly different colour or texture. In more rare cases, chemotherapy may cause the loss of eyebrows, eyelashes, and body hair. These usually grow back.

WHAT STEPS CAN I TAKE TO PREVENT HAIR LOSS?

- Treat your hair gently:
 - use a soft-bristled brush;
 - wash your hair with mild shampoo every four to seven days;
 - gently towel-dry your hair;
 - let your hair dry naturally or use a blow dryer at low temperature.
- If you usually dye your hair, ask your hairdresser or colourist to use milder products to avoid irritating your scalp.
- Consult a wig-maker before your hair starts to fall out; this will make it easier to choose a wig style and colour that closely resemble your usual hairdo.
- You can use turbans, scarves, and hats to conceal hair loss. Such accessories can be elegant and attractive when matched with your clothes.

Fertility problems

Certain chemotherapy treatments can temporarily disrupt reproductive functions of men and women. Fertility issues vary according to the medication prescribed, the person's age, and their state of health. Problems related to fertility may persist after the end of treatment and at times can result in permanent sterility (no longer being able to conceive a child). Your physician will discuss these adverse side effects with you if this applies to your case.

WOMEN...

Some medications can prevent the release of eggs by the ovaries, or cause a decline in the production of eggs. Menstruation may become irregular or even stop completely during the treatment period. Hot flashes and other symptoms of menopause occur at times. In some cases, the ovaries start to produce eggs again once the treatments are over and the menstrual cycle returns to normal. In other cases, sterility is permanent. Freezing oocytes (cells that become eggs) before starting treatment is an option.

MEN...

Chemotherapy frequently results in a reduction in the production and quality of sperm. This reduction in fertility may occur throughout treatment, but will not hinder erection or ejaculation. Some chemotherapy treatments can have a permanent impact on fertility. Freezing sperm for future insemination is an option.

WITH YOU... FOR YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

This section contains the questions most often asked at the chemotherapy center. Don't hesitate to consult the care team for more details.

Organizing your routine

In an agenda, on a calendar, or in your oncology passport, note your upcoming treatments, appointments, tests, and the professionals you meet. Keep this reference information and the documentation you are given in a single location like a binder or a pouch. This way, you'll be able to find the information quickly when the need arises.

Diet

There is no specific diet to follow during chemotherapy treatment. However, adhering to a varied, healthy diet based on Canada's Food Guide is advised because your body needs all types of nutrients for its growth, maintenance, and repairs.

A healthy diet adapted to your condition will enable you to:

- maintain your weight;
- better cope with the adverse side effects of treatment;
- repair tissues damaged by surgery, radiation therapy, or chemotherapy;
- strengthen your defences against infection;
- improve your well-being and quality of life.

Drinking plenty of fluids is just as important as a good diet. Drinking lots of water is recommended to help the kidneys eliminate the toxic products produced by the destruction of cancer cells.

CAN I EAT ALL FOODS?

Yes. However, we recommend that you favour the following products:

- pasteurized products;
- certified inspected meat;
- meat, chicken, fish, seafood and eggs cooked;
- washed fruits and vegetables.

SHOULD I REFRAIN FROM EATING OR DRINKING CERTAIN PRODUCTS?

Yes. We recommend that you avoid the following products and locations:

- sushi and raw fish;
- bulk products;
- cold cuts, probiotic concentrates and products containing them, dairy products packaged at the counter;
- green tea;
- dairy bars;
- salad bars;
- buffets.

CAN I DRINK ALCOHOL?

Although it is preferable that you avoid alcohol, drinking a small quantity is usually considered safe and will not affect the effectiveness of the treatment. Nonetheless, we suggest that you discuss this with your doctor.

Natural health products and medicinal plants

Tell us if you take natural products and ask the oncology pharmacist's advice before beginning to take a new natural product.

CAN I USE NATURAL PRODUCTS AND MEDICINAL PLANTS?

No. You must discuss this with the oncology pharmacist. Natural products (vitamin supplements, glucosamine, etc.) often contain extracts from a number of different plants.

Taking a natural product during chemotherapy treatments may cause the following problems:

- a bad reaction to your chemotherapy treatment;
- a reduction in the effectiveness of your treatment;
- an increase in side effects from your chemotherapy.

Pain

Experiencing pain will have an impact on several aspects of your life. Obtaining relief is therefore a priority. If you feel pain, contact a member of the care team, who will assess its origin and its intensity in order to provide you with information and relief.

IS THE ADMINISTRATION OF CHEMOTHERAPY PAINFUL?

Undergoing chemotherapy treatment is generally painless. At times, the veins may become sensitive. If unusual pain arises in the days following a treatment, let us know.

Body fluids

Your body will need a few days to eliminate the chemotherapy medications. Most medications will be eliminated by your kidneys or liver. For about four (4) days after the end of the administration of your chemotherapy medications, some of them will find their way into your body fluids (urine, stools, and vomit). It is therefore important that you and your loved ones take certain precautions during these four (4) days.

WHAT PRECAUTIONS MUST BE TAKEN REGARDING MY BODY FLUIDS?

During the first four (4) days following a chemotherapy treatment:

- urinate from a seated position to avoid splashing;
- put down the lid of the toilet seat after each use;
- flush the toilet twice consecutively;
- regularly clean the edge and outside of the toilet bowl and the floor around the toilet;
- in the event of vomiting or incontinence, wear gloves when cleaning up;
- wash sheets and linens separately if they have been soiled with your body fluids;
- wash your hands after contact with your body fluids or after having touched a surface that has been in contact with your body fluids;
- pregnant and breastfeeding women must not handle your body fluids.

Emotions and stress

You have been experiencing a variety of emotions since you learned of your disease, which is completely normal. However, if your emotions fluctuate a great deal and if this interferes with your daily routine, it is vital that you confide in us to obtain help. The symptoms of stress and anxiety can be grim at times and can alter your quality of life.

WHAT CAN I DO TO MANAGE MY EMOTIONS AND MY STRESS?

Try to identify the source and discuss it with a loved one. Some approaches like meditation, deep breathing, and visualization may help you relax. Psychosocial and/or psychological help is part of the care and services offered. Don't hesitate to talk about this with a member of the care team who will guide you to the right person.

Work and financial situation

Check with your insurance company soon after your cancer diagnosis to determine the compensation you are eligible for. Various assistance programs for individuals with cancer are available, depending on your situation. If you are experiencing financial difficulties, discuss this with the care team who will refer you to the appropriate resources. A consultation with a social worker may also be offered to help you cope with this situation and reduce your anxiety.

CAN I CONTINUE TO WORK DURING MY CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENT?

The decision to stop working will depend on various factors, such as:

- the type of treatment you will be undergoing;
- the adverse side effects of the treatment and their intensity;
- the type of job you have and the flexibility of your schedule;
- your financial needs.

Sexuality

Chemotherapy does not compromise the ability to have sexual intercourse. However, certain medical conditions may result in sexual relations being contraindicated. For example, if you are at risk of infection, i.e. your white blood cell count is low (neutropenia), refrain from vaginal and anal intercourse. If this applies to you, the physician will advise you.

IS IT NORMAL NOT TO BE INTERESTED IN HAVING SEXUAL RELATIONS?

Yes. It is completely normal. Anxiety relating to the disease, fatigue, or physical discomfort may temporarily cause a reduction in sexual desire. Do not hesitate to discuss this with your partner. You may meet with the sexologist from the interdisciplinary team, as needed.

IS IT NORMAL TO FEEL PAIN DURING SEXUAL INTERCOURSE?

For women, hormonal changes caused by chemotherapy may cause vaginal dryness, a burning feeling, or itchiness. If you have pain during intercourse, use a water-based vaginal lubricant.



IS IT NORMAL TO EXPERIENCE BLEEDING AFTER INTERCOURSE?

Since the number of blood platelets may decline due to chemotherapy, light vaginal bleeding may occur after intercourse. If bleeding is heavy and persistent, i.e. a sanitary napkin is soaked every two hours, go to the emergency.

MUST I USE PROTECTION (A CONDOM) DURING INTERCOURSE?

Wearing a condom is recommended for the first four (4) days after a chemotherapy treatment, because there will be traces of chemotherapy in the sperm or vaginal secretions.

IS IT DANGEROUS TO BECOME PREGNANT DURING MY CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENT?

Women of reproductive age must use mechanical methods of birth control (ex.: diaphragm, condom) unless their doctor authorizes the use of contraceptive pills. A child should not be conceived during the treatment period because chemotherapy treatments are harmful to fetal development.

Men undergoing chemotherapy treatment must also avoid conceiving a child because chemotherapy alters sperm cell quality.

Renovations

CAN I BEGIN OR CONTINUE RENOVATION WORK WHILE I AM UNDERGOING CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENT?

Refrain from carrying out renovation work while you are having chemotherapy treatment because there is a possibility that fungi will be released into the air even if the material being used is new.

Pets

CAN I KEEP MY PET IN THE HOUSE EVEN IF I'M HAVING CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENT?

Your pet may stay in the house during your treatment. You can continue doing your activities with it. However, wait until the end of your treatment before introducing a new pet into your home.

WHAT PRECAUTIONS MUST I TAKE CONCERNING MY PET?

- Do not touch the animal's litter or excrement (stools, urine, vomit).
- Avoid getting scratched.
- Wash your hands after playing with or touching the animal.

Daily routine activities and physical activity

Engaging in physical activity and daily routine activities are helpful because they prevent and mitigate the adverse side effects of chemotherapy, help you maintain a good quality of life, and enable you to keep your muscles stronger, which reduces the risk of falls. As much as possible, plan your physical activities for when you are feeling more energetic. Too much rest, just like not enough rest, may accentuate the feeling of fatigue.

MAY I START OR CONTINUE A PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WHILE I AM UNDERGOING TREATMENT?

If you are in the habit of engaging in recreational activities, outings, or physical exercise, you may continue to do so. You may also begin an activity or exercise program as long as you respect your physical condition and your limitations.

MAY I GARDEN IF I AM UNDERGOING TREATMENT?

You may garden under certain conditions:

- do not touch soil or sand needlessly due to the presence of fungi and other germs;
- wear gloves and a mask to garden;
- do not touch mold.

MAY I SWIM IN A POOL, A LAKE, OR THE OCEAN IF I AM UNDERGOING TREATMENT?

Refrain from swimming in public pools and lakes, because they contain more bacteria. On the other hand, private pools and beaches on the ocean are suitable locations for swimming.

AFTER CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENTS

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENTS?

Once your chemotherapy treatments are over, you will be in a recovery period. Little by little, you will notice an improvement in your condition and your strength will return gradually. The end of cancer treatment is often accompanied by strong emotions that sometimes vary a great deal (joy, feeling of accomplishment, fear, uncertainty). You may be both relieved and anxious at the same time, because you will no longer have doctors and nurses at your side on a regular basis. Such a reaction is normal, and you will gradually adapt to your new situation.

Recovery timelines are different from one person to another. If you have had to stop engaging in certain activities, you may progressively return to doing them. It is important to give yourself time to recuperate physically and psychologically.

WILL I HAVE MEDICAL FOLLOW-UP?

Yes. Your physician will plan follow-up medical appointments with you. For these appointments, you will likely have control blood tests. Your doctor may also order various follow-up tests like X-rays or imaging tests (scans). Each individual's schedule of medical visits is different, depending on the cancer and type of treatment given. However, most people see their doctor every two or three months. It is important to express your worries and to inform your physician of any symptoms that bother you. Over time, your visits will become more spaced out and eventually the follow-up will be performed by your family physician.

The pivot nurse will remain your main contact with the medical team once your treatments have ended. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact her.

GLOSSARY

CANCER (pp. 3, 4, 11, 13, 25, 30)

Disease caused by a change in the cells, which become abnormal and multiply in an uncontrolled manner. These dysregulated cells may spread elsewhere in the body, but they do not all spread.

HORMONE THERAPY (p. 4)

Cancer treatment that involves decreasing or hindering the activity or production of hormones that are likely to stimulate the growth of cancer cells.

METASTASIS (p. 4)


Tumour formed from cancer cells that have broken away from the primary tumour and been taken by lymphatic or blood vessels to another part of the body, where they have settled.

REMISSION (p. 4)

Period of time during which the cancer is well controlled and there is no sign of it.

TARGETED THERAPY (pp. 4, 19)

Treatment that seeks to deprive cancer cells of elements vital to their development, for example, their own blood vessels, or to deprive cells of the mechanisms that stimulate their division. Targeted treatments thus slow down the growth of cancer cells.



A team that takes care of you!

Don't hesitate to play a role in your health care.
Tell us if you have questions or concerns.
A range of professionals can meet your needs.

Chemotherapy Center

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