



Cancer Centre
of Southeastern Ontario



Chemotherapy and You

Education class for new patients

January 2014

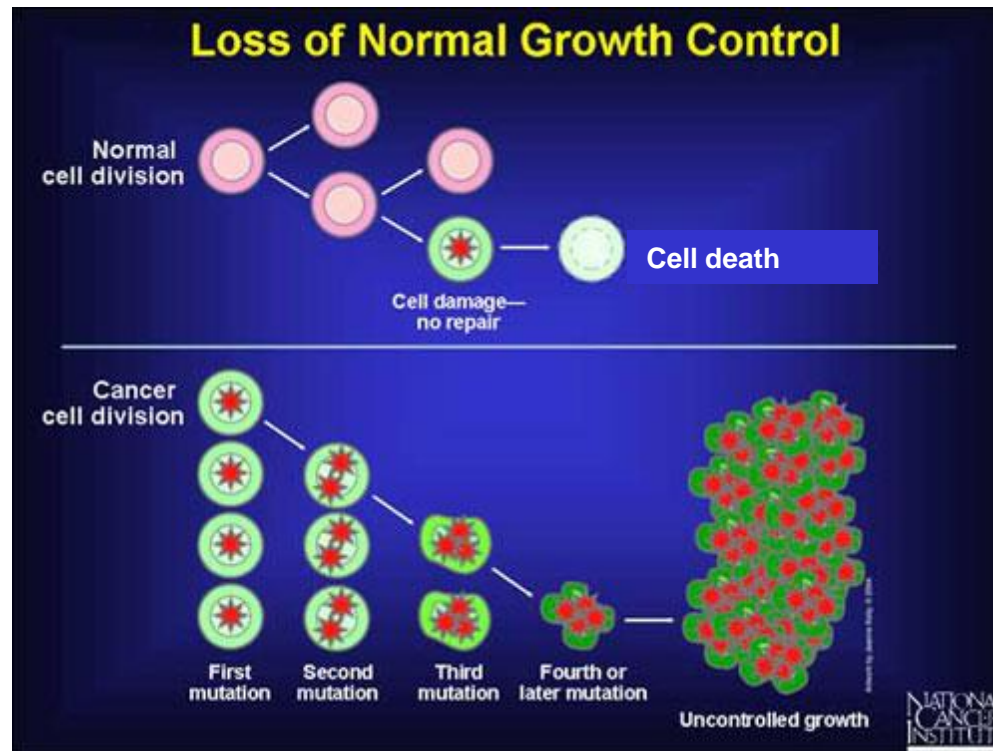
Class overview

- What is chemotherapy
- Side effects and how to manage them
- Strategies and resources to help you cope
- What to expect during your chemotherapy treatment



What is chemotherapy?

- Cancer begins when cells start to grow out of control



What is chemotherapy?

- Chemotherapy is a general term for drugs that destroy cancer cells or slow them from growing.
- You may receive one chemotherapy drug or a combination of different chemotherapy drugs
- Can be given by mouth, directly into your vein (IV) or by injection under your skin



- If you get your chemotherapy by IV, a special long-term IV, called a Vascular Access Device, may be inserted.
- The 2 most common special long-term IVs are:
 1. Peripherally inserted central catheter (PICC)
 2. Port-a-cath (PORT)

Venous Access Devices



Peripherally inserted
central catheter (PICC)

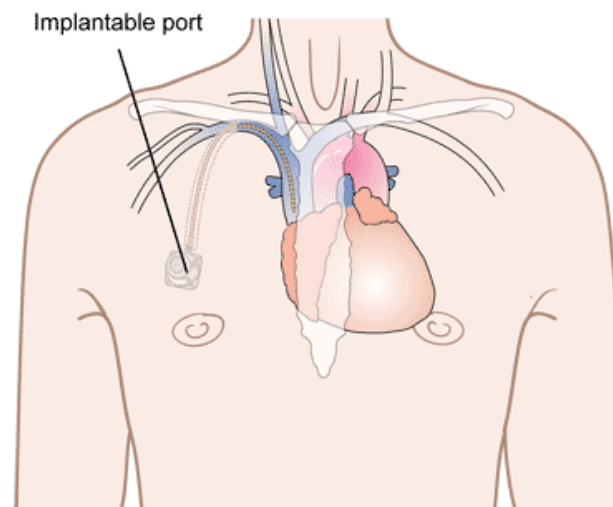


Diagram showing an implantable port
© CancerHelp UK

Port-a-cath (PORT)

- ✓ **Immediately** report changes like unusual warmth, redness, swelling or tenderness around the site
- ✓ If there are any issues, let your clinic nurse know

How often is chemotherapy given?

- Chemotherapy is often given in a series of cycles. Each cycle includes:
 - Treatment day(s)
 - Recovery days after treatment
- Length of time on treatment days depends on the type of drugs you receive. Can range from 15 minutes to 6 hours.



What is chemotherapy?

- Chemotherapy can destroy or slow the growth of cancer cells, but it also has similar effects on 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
 - Fortunately, most side effects are temporary

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

Your side effects will depend on the type of chemotherapy you receive, the dose you are given, and how your body reacts to chemotherapy

- 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

To monitor your blood counts,
you will get regular blood tests.



Low white blood cells (neutropenia)

Risk of infection

When: 7-14 days after chemotherapy

- ✓ Wash your hands often
- ✓ Avoid small crowded areas or anyone who is ill
- ✓ Check your temperature with an oral thermometer every day (morning) and if you feel unwell
- ✓ Know the signs of an infection



Know the signs of an infection

- **A temperature of 38.3° C (100.9° F) once or 38.0° C (100.4° F) for over an hour**

✓ Go to your nearest Emergency Department right away with your **Fever Card** (even if you feel well)

- Loose bowel movements
- Chills/sweating
- Burning of frequent urination
- Severe cough, sore throat or mouth sores
- An open area that appears red or swollen

✓ Call your cancer care team. Do not wait until your next appointment to report these symptoms.

Fever Card



Risk of bleeding (may have bruising or small red dots on your skin)

When: 7-14 days after chemotherapy

- ✓ Use a soft tooth brush and electric razor
- ✓ Avoid activities that may cause injury
- ✓ Do not take the following without speaking to your cancer care team:
 - Aspirin or ibuprofen (like Advil, Motrin)
 - Any new medications (including herbal)
- ✓ **If you have any unusual bleeding call your doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away**

Low red blood cells (anemia)

A low red blood cell count can make you feel tired

- ✓ Get plenty of rest. Keep activity times short with rest periods in between
- ✓ Avoid heavy or strenuous work or exercise
- ✓ Eat a well-balanced diet
- ✓ **If you feel:**
 - **Dizzy**
 - **Short of breath**
 - **Headaches or ringing in your ears**

**Call your doctor or go to the nearest
Emergency Department right away**



When: Usually on the days you receive treatment and for 1-2 days later.

One of the most feared side effects.

- ✓ Take your anti-nausea medication as prescribed. Take your “as needed” medications as soon as you feel any nausea.
- ✓ Keep track of when it happens and tell your cancer care team at your next visit
- ✓ Food and fluid choices
- ✓ **If for more than 24 hours you:**
 - **Have vomited several times**
 - **Can't keep food or fluids down**

Call your doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department

Mouth sores (mucositis)

Soreness, redness, white patches in mouth/tongue

When: 7-14 days after your chemotherapy treatment

- ✓ Brush your teeth after meals with a soft toothbrush
- ✓ Do not use mouth washes that contain alcohol.
Instead use a baking soda mouth rinse 3-4 times a day ($\frac{1}{4}$ tsp baking soda and $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp salt in 1 cup of warm water)
- ✓ If your mouth is sore, eat soft, bland foods like cooked cereals, mashed potatoes, and puddings
- ✓ **Tell your cancer care team if you have mouth sores or if your mouth hurts a lot.**

Described as a metallic taste, or a lack of taste

When: Taste changes usually stop about 3 to 4 weeks after the end of treatment

- ✓ Keep your mouth moist (sipping water throughout the day, sucking on ice chips)
- ✓ Try sugar-free, mint gum or hard candies (with flavors such as mint, lemon, or orange) to mask a bitter or metallic taste in the mouth
- ✓ Use plastic utensils and glass cookware to lessen a metallic taste
- ✓ Flavor foods with herbs, spices, sugar, lemon, or sauces

Loose or watery stools (bowel movements) 3 or more times a day

- ✓ Rest and drink lots of fluids (water, juice and sports drinks)
- ✓ Avoid natural laxatives like prunes, rhubarb and papaya
- ✓ **If you have 6 to 8 (or more) loose bowel movements daily for more than 2 days, call your doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department**

Difficulty having a bowel movement

Like nausea, important to prevent

- ✓ Ask your doctor about stool softeners and laxatives
- ✓ Stay active and drink lots of fluids
- ✓ Eat more high fiber foods (whole grain bread, fruit and vegetables)
- ✓ **If you have not had a bowel movement for 3 or more days, call your doctor.**

Caused by some, not all chemotherapy

When: 2 to 3 weeks after treatment begins, grows back 3-6 months after treatment ends

- ✓ Try a short haircut before treatment starts
- ✓ If you plan to buy a wig, do so while you still have hair
- ✓ Use mild shampoo and be gentle with your hair
- ✓ Protect your head from the sun
- ✓ What's available to you:
 - Free hand knitted hats in Chemo Treatment Area and Patient and Family Resource Centre
 - Reconditioned wigs for reuse at the hair salon on Connell 1
 - Look Good Feel Better Program

Skin and 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 made for sensitive skin
- ✓ Try to stay out of direct sunlight and use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or greater
- ✓ Tell your nurse or doctor if you notice any changes
- ✓ Look Good Feel Better Program



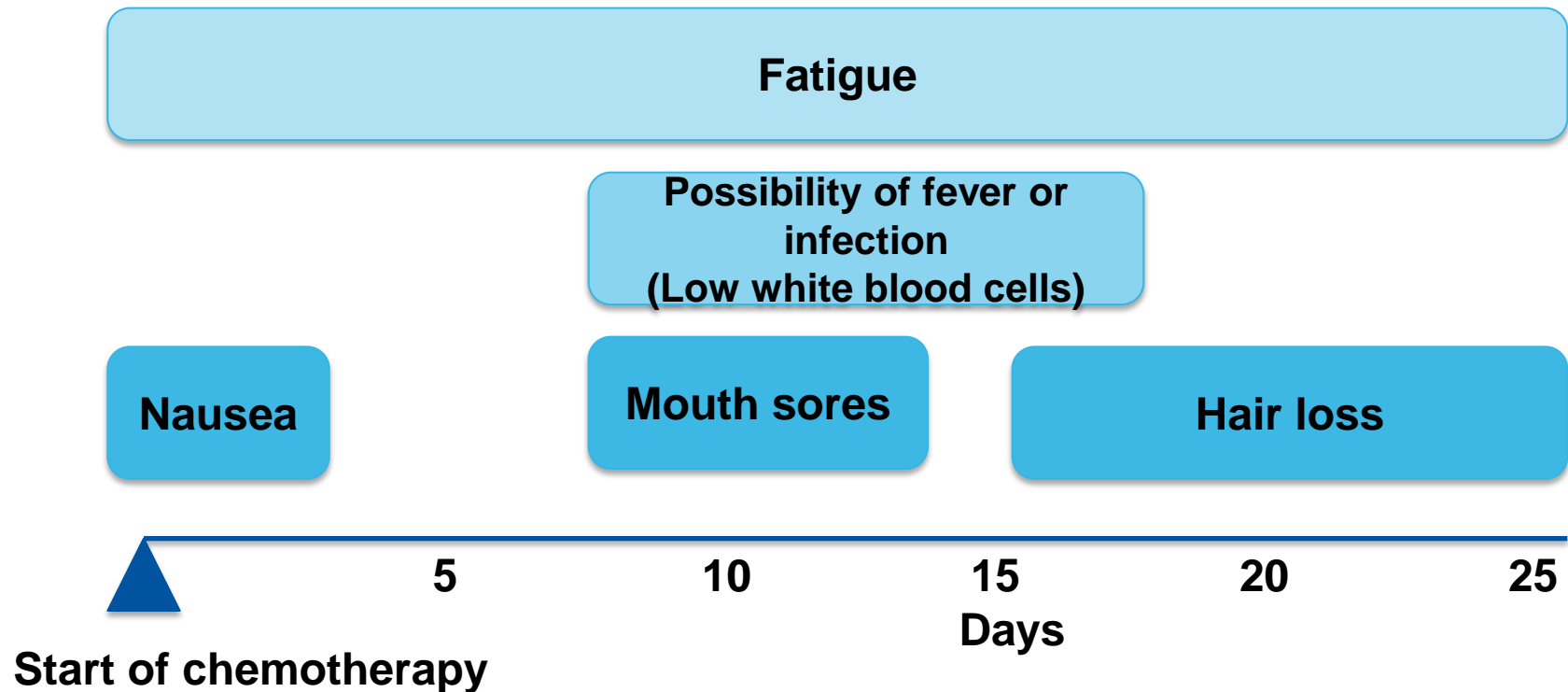
Feeling tired or a lack of energy that does not go away with sleep or rest. More severe and lasts longer.

- ✓ **Listen to your body.**
- ✓ Conserve your energy. Plan your important activities for times of the day when you have the most energy.
- ✓ Rest during the day, but leave long sleep for night time
- ✓ Exercise regularly, even if it is just a short walk
- ✓ Do not skip meals, eat often and drink lots of fluids
- ✓ Tell your nurse or doctor how fatigue is affecting you.



When to expect common side effects

**Remember: not everyone will have all of these side effects.
Talk to your cancer care team for more information**



- Physical and emotional changes during chemotherapy can cause sexual side effects.
- Common side effects: loss of desire, painful intercourse, changes in orgasm or erection

- ✓ Talk with a nurse, doctor or social worker
- ✓ Be open and honest with your spouse or partner. Talk about your feelings and concerns.
- ✓ **If you or your partner are able to become pregnant, you must use birth control**
- ✓ **Use a condom during sexual activity with a partner for 7 days after you receive chemotherapy**

- Chemotherapy can cause fertility changes in both men and women

✓ **If you plan to have children in the future or think you might want to, talk to your cancer care team before starting treatment**

Safe handling of your bodily fluids

When: for 7 days after each chemotherapy treatment

Bodily fluids: urine, vomit, stool, blood

- ✓ Flush the toilet twice after use, with the lid down
- ✓ Sit on the toilet when urinating (males)
- ✓ Wear gloves if cleaning up or handling soiled items
- ✓ Double bag soiled disposable items and keep separate from other garbage
- ✓ Wash any soiled linens twice in your washing machine (hot water) and separate from other laundry
- ✓ Wear a condom during sexual activity
- ✓ Hugging and kissing is safe

Coping with emotions: patients and family members

- You may be feeling some or all these emotions:
 - Anger
 - Feeling depressed or sad
 - Fear
 - Anxiety
 - Sense of loneliness
 - Feeling helpless
- These emotions are normal and a natural part of living

Some things you can do to lessen the effect of stress on you:

- ✓ Try to keep some normal routines and activities in your life
- ✓ Accept help from others and let them know how they can help
- ✓ Share your feelings with people close to you
- ✓ Be open with your cancer care team

Family members: How you can help

- **Taking care of yourself is part of being there for someone else**

- ✓ Go with your loved one to their appointment
- ✓ Keep surfaces clean
- ✓ Wash your hands
- ✓ Make quick/easy meals
- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Allow for silence



What to expect during your chemotherapy treatment



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

1. Clinic (doctor) visits



2. Treatment visits



During this visit you will usually:

- Get blood work done
- Be assessed by your nurse and doctor.



- ✓ Arrive 45 minutes before your appointment time for blood work

While you are assessed by your nurse and doctor:

- ✓ This is the time to tell your team about how you have been doing and explain any side effects.
- ✓ If you have questions about prescriptions, ask now.
- ✓ Bring your **patient binder** with questions written down for this visit.

- You need to complete a symptom assessment self-questionnaire (called 'ESAS') at every clinic visit
- Asks you to rate 9 common symptoms on a scale of 0 to 10

Your symptom scores help us to understand how you are feeling so that we can give you care that meets your needs



Treatment visits

After a clinic visit

Clinic visits are usually 1-2 days before treatment visits.

During your treatment visit you will:

- Check-in to the Chemotherapy Registration and Waiting Area on Burr 1
- Wait to be called in and then receive treatment in a chair.

✓ Arrive **15 minutes** before your appointment time

With no clinic visit

*Sometimes you won't need a clinic visit before your treatment visit. This is called a **direct to chemo** visit.*

During this visit you will:

- Get blood work done
- Check-in and wait for drug(s) to be made, then receive treatment

✓ Arrive **2 hours** before your appointment time

What will happen while chemotherapy is given?

- Sit in a recliner chair
- Nurse will give pre-medications and start your IV to prevent side effects
- At your first treatment, the nurse and pharmacist will provide more education
- Most patients do not feel pain or anything unusual. If you do, tell your nurse right away.
- First treatment: will get a prescription to pick up any additional medications you should take, like anti-nausea drugs, on your way home



What to bring on treatment visits

- ✓ Your health card
- ✓ Private insurance information
- ✓ Money to pay for possible prescriptions and parking
- ✓ Blanket or anything that keeps you comfortable
- ✓ Wear a shirt with sleeves that can be rolled up
- ✓ Snacks or food
- ✓ Books, tablet or laptop (free wireless internet)
- ✓ Bring earphones for your personal TV
- ✓ Family member or friend
- ✓ List of your current medications
- ✓ Medications you take during the day
- ✓ Your **patient binder** to file any important information

- Your treatment plan may include drugs that are not paid by OHIP

- ✓ Know what kind of drug coverage you have before you start treatment
- ✓ Refer to your **guidebook** to find out what you need to know before you start treatment
- ✓ Our **drug access navigator** or **social workers** can answer your questions (contact information in the guidebook)

Chemotherapy closer to home

- It may be possible to receive your chemotherapy and other supportive treatments in:
 - Napanee
 - Brockville

✓ Ask your nurse or doctor for more information

Parking at the Cancer Centre

Where to park:

- Lower George Street
- Parking lots off George Street
- Waterfront and Richardson Beach Lots
- City Park

1. Get pay-and-display ticket from George Street meter (\$1 per hour or \$5 for the day)
2. Display ticket with your pink parking permit on your dashboard



- Canadian Cancer Society transportation services
- Patient and Family Resource Centre
- Hospital and Community support groups and organizations



Canadian
Cancer
Society



Look Good...Feel Better®
Supporting women with cancer

Thank you!

- Questions?
- Quick tour of the Chemotherapy Treatment Area