



New Patient Chemotherapy Class

For patients and families

Last updated April 2020

Cancer Centre of
Southeastern Ontario

A Cancer Care Ontario Partner

Kingston Health
Sciences Centre

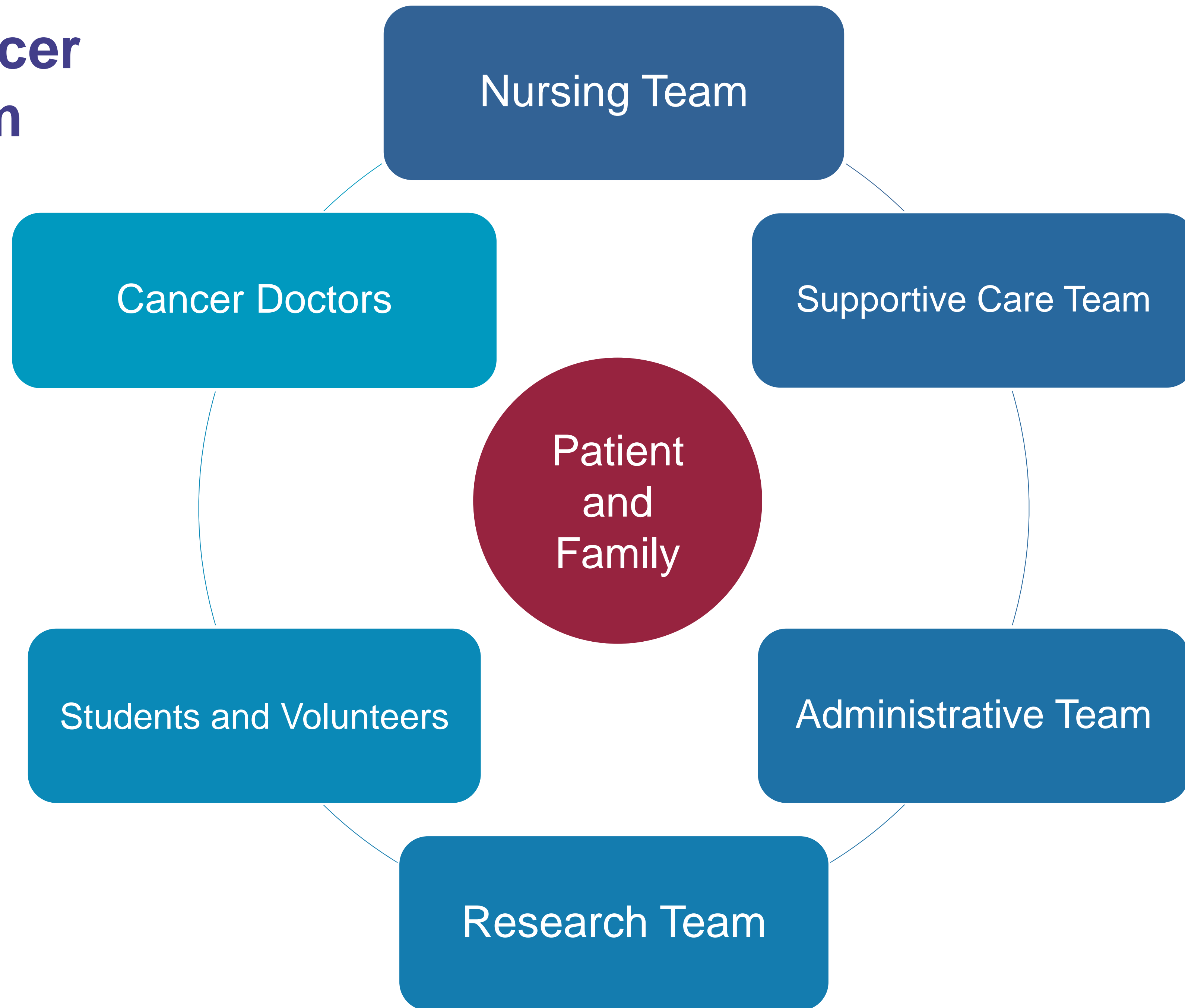
Centre des sciences de
la santé de Kingston

Class Overview

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



Your cancer care team



Who to contact for help



Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:00 pm

- Call your Cancer Doctor's medical secretary.
- **1-800-567-5722** and enter the extension on your cancer doctors business card.
- The medical secretary will communicate your concern to your nurse or doctor.

Outside of these hours (Monday to Friday after 4 p.m. and 24 hours a day on weekends and holidays)

- Call CAREchart@home, after hours symptom management telephone service
- **1-877-681-3057**
- An operator will answer your call and connect you to a specialized oncology nurse who will help you.
- Have your wallet card and your medication list on hand when you call.

What is Chemotherapy?

- Chemotherapy is a general term for drugs that:
 - destroy cancer cells or
 - slow cancer cells from growing/multiplying
- Targets cancer cells in areas of your body that sometimes radiation or surgery cannot reach
- Can be used alone or in combination with other forms of treatment
- There are hundreds of different kinds of chemotherapy drugs!



How is Chemotherapy Given?

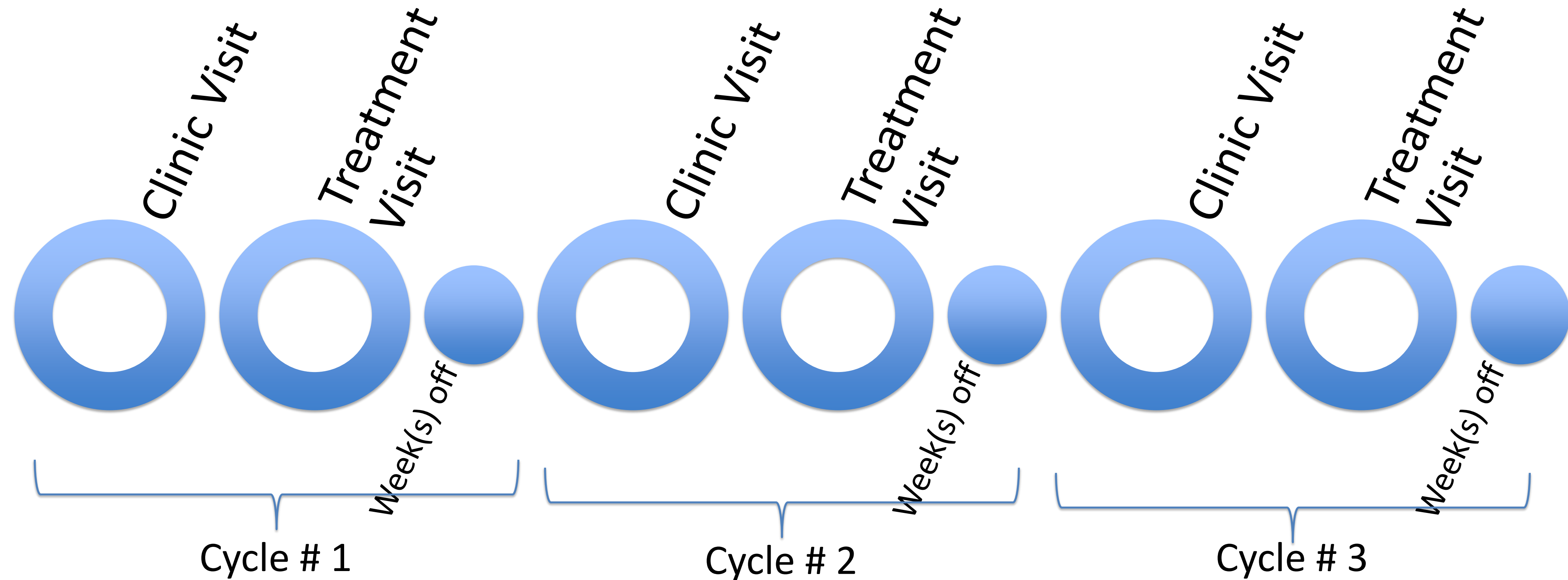


- You may receive one chemotherapy drug or a combination of different chemotherapy drugs
 - Protocol or Regimen
- Most commonly given by :
 - Mouth as a pill, capsule or liquid
 - Directly into your vein (using an IV or venous access device)
 - Injection under the skin



Treatment Schedule

- Given in a series of cycles



Taking Care of Your Emotional Health

You may be feeling some or all of these emotions:

- ◆ Anger
- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ Sadness
- ◆ Fear or uncertainty

These emotions are normal and a natural response to stress.



Tips on Managing

Find Support:

- ❖ Talk with someone you trust who is a good listener
- ❖ Let your team know how you are doing
- ❖ Social workers are available to see you and/or your family for psychosocial support

Focus on things that make you feel better (the positive parts of your life or things you can control)

Get counselling to help you cope

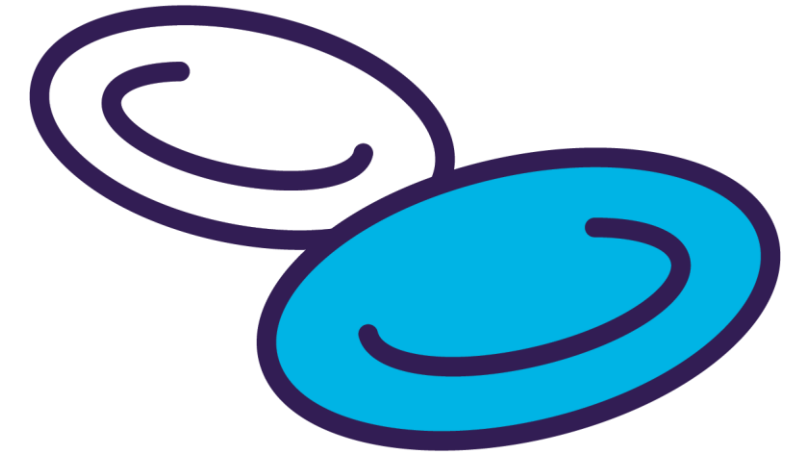
Take care of your body:

- ✓ Eat well
- ✓ Exercise
- ✓ Improve your sleep
- ✓ Limit alcohol

Make lists of calming, enjoyable, and useful activities

Try relaxation activities

What are the Side Effects of 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, skin and nails, and hair follicles
- Damage to normal cells is the reason for many of the side effects
 - Fortunately, most side effects are temporary

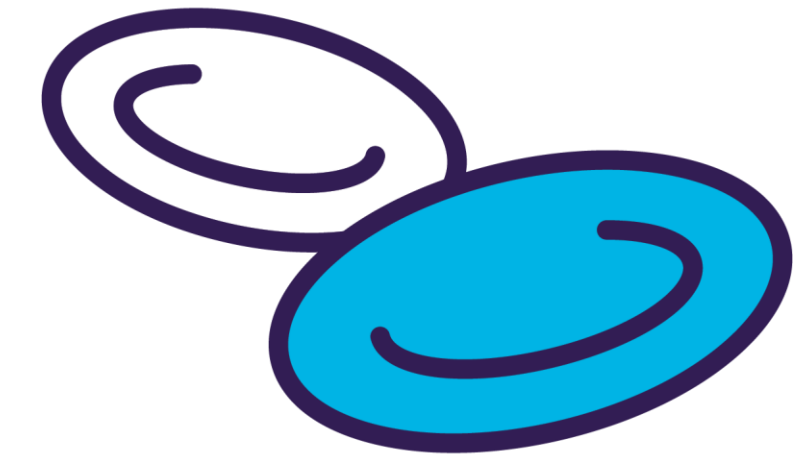
Common Side Effects



- Low blood counts
 - White blood cells (WBC)
 - Platelets
 - Red blood cells (RBC)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Bowel changes (diarrhea, 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.

Low 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

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

Low White Blood Cells (neutropenia)

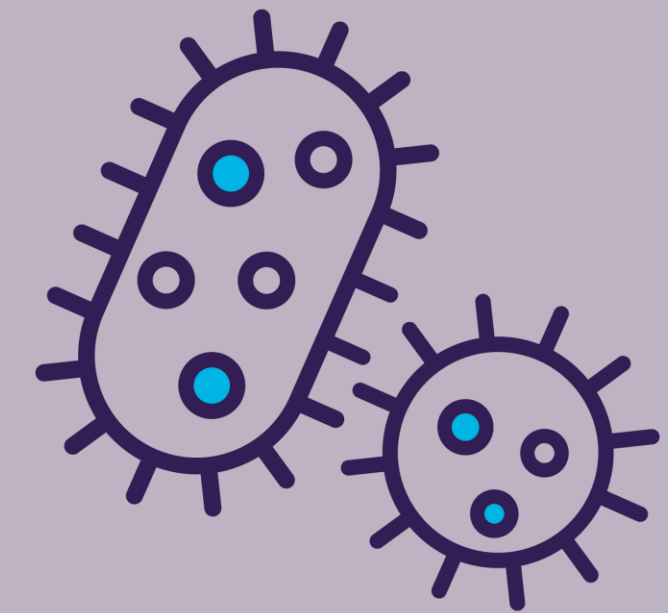
- When: 7-14 days after chemotherapy
- What: Risk of Infection

Tips on Managing



- ✓ **Wash your hands often.**
- ✓ Try to stay away from people who have colds, flu, or other contagious diseases.
- ✓ Know the signs of an infection (see next slide).
- ✓ Check your temperature with a digital oral thermometer daily, and if you feel hot or unwell (for example, chills).
- ✓ Avoid taking medications that treat a fever, for example Tylenol, before you take your temperature as they may hide a fever.

Know the signs of an infection



- A temperature of 38.3° C (100.9° F) or higher ↑ 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 or 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

Low platelet count

- When: 7-14 days after chemotherapy
- What: Risk of Bleeding (may have bruising or small red dots on skin)

Tips on Managing

- ✓ 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:
 - Any new medications (including herbal supplements)
 - Aspirin or ibuprofen (like Advil, Motrin). However, If taking aspirin or blood thinners regularly for other medical problems, do not stop taking it before you have discussed this with your doctor
- ✓ **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.



Tips on Managing

- ✓ 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
- ✓ **Call your doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away if you feel:**
 - ✓ **Dizzy**
 - ✓ **Short of breath**
 - ✓ **Headaches or ringing in your ears**

Nausea and Vomiting

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

Tips on Managing

- ✓ Take anti-nausea medication exactly as prescribed. It is easier to prevent nausea with medications than to treat it once it starts
- ✓ Keep track of when it happens and tell your cancer care team at your next visit
- ✓ Drink clear fluids and avoid large meals
- ✓ Use tips from the “**How to Manage Your Nausea and Vomiting**” patient guide
- ✓ **Contact your doctor if nausea lasts more than 48 hours or vomiting for more than 24 hours**

Mouth Problem (mucositis)

Mouth sores, redness, and white patches in your mouth or on your tongue, trouble or pain with swallowing

When: 7-14 days after your chemotherapy treatment



Tips on Managing

- ✓ Brush your teeth, gums and tongue after eating and before bed. Use a soft toothbrush
- ✓ Rinse your mouth with a homemade mouth rinse 4-5 times a day (1 teaspoon baking soda and 1 teaspoon salt in 4 cups of warm water). Do not use mouth washes with alcohol
- ✓ If your mouth is sore, eat soft, bland foods like cooked cereals, mashed potatoes, and puddings
- ✓ Use tips from the “**How to Manage Your Mouth Problems**” patient guide
- ✓ **Tell your cancer care team if you have mouth sores or if your mouth hurts a lot**

Taste Changes

Sometimes described as a metallic taste, or a lack of taste

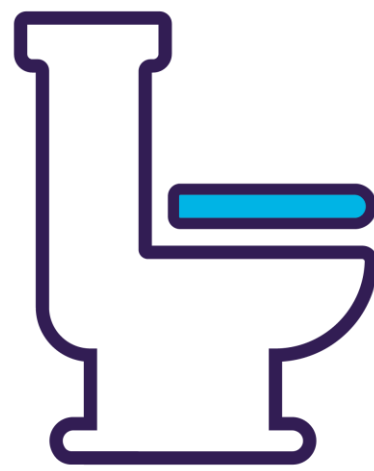
When: Taste changes usually stop about 3 to 4 weeks after the end of treatment

Tips on Managing

- ✓ Use tips from **“Coping with Taste Changes”** or **“How to Manage Your Mouth Problems”** patient booklet
- ✓ 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
- ✓ Experiment with foods, spices and seasonings

Diarrhea

Can be caused by some types of chemotherapy



Tips on Managing

- ✓ Take anti-diarrhea medication if your health care team prescribed it
- ✓ Rest and **drink lots of fluids**
- ✓ 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

Constipation

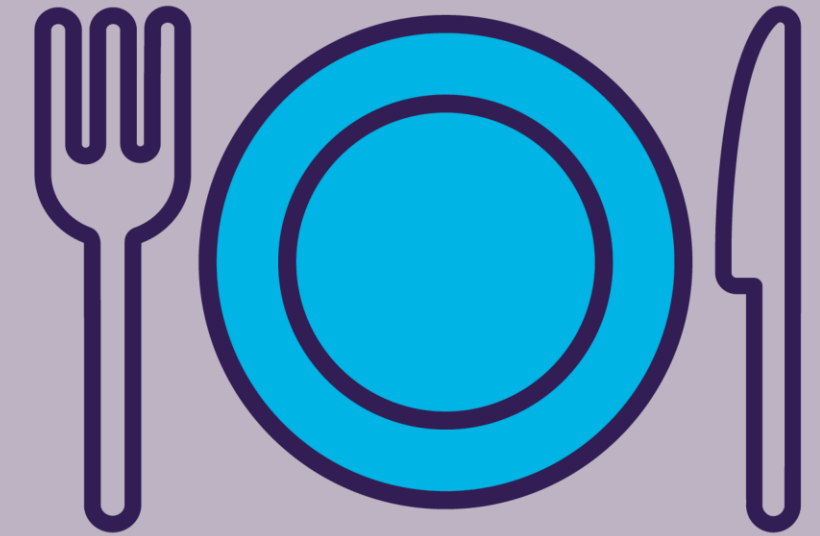
Can be caused by other medications for pain or nausea

Tips on Managing

- ✓ Like nausea, important to prevent
- ✓ Ask your doctor about laxatives
- ✓ **Drink lots of fluids**
- ✓ Eat more fiber foods (whole grain bread, fruit and vegetables)
- ✓ If you have not had a bowel movement for 3 or more days, call your doctor

✓ Use tips from the **diarrhea** and **constipation** patient guides

Nutrition



Nutrition is an important part of your cancer treatment.

Eating well can help you to:

- ❖ Maintain your body weight
- ❖ Improve your energy and strength,
- ❖ Decrease the risk of infection
- ❖ Assist your body with healing and recovery from cancer treatments.

Registered Dietitians are available to help you manage symptoms or side effects of chemotherapy:

- unintentional weight loss,
- loss of appetite
- trouble swallowing
- taste changes,
- sore or dry mouth,
- nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or constipation

Hair Thinning or Loss (Alopecia)

Caused by some, not all chemotherapy

When: 2 to 3 weeks after treatment begins. Grows back after treatment ends, but colour and texture may change

Tips on Managing

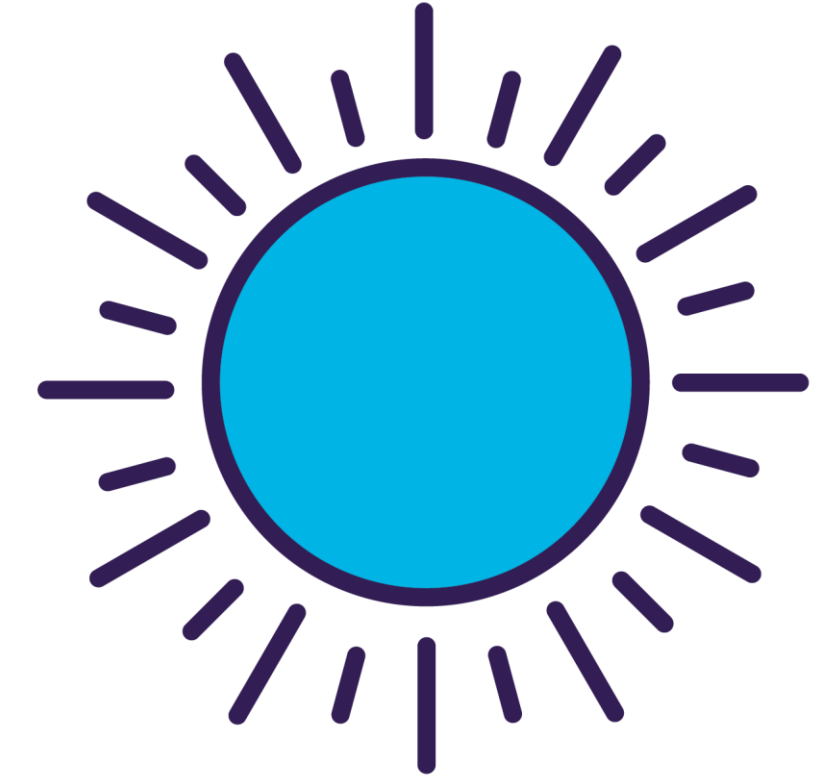
- ✓ For long or medium-length hair, you may want to try a short haircut before treatment starts.
- ✓ If you plan to buy a wig, you may want to do so before hair loss occurs to match your natural hair colour and texture.
- ✓ Be gentle with your hair.
- ✓ Protect your head from the sun.
- ✓ What's available to you:
 - ✓ Free hand knitted hats in Chemo Treatment Area
 - ✓ **“Hair Pieces and Accessories”** list
 - ✓ 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



Tips on Managing

- ✓ Bathe in warm water (not hot water)
- ✓ Use gentle soaps, creams and lotions made for sensitive skin
- ✓ Keep nails clean and cut short. Wear gloves when you wash the dishes, work in the garden, or clean the house
- ✓ 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- **especially any tingling, numbness, burning or pain**
- ✓ Look Good Feel Better Program

Fatigue

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



Tips on Managing

- ❖ **Pace yourself, do not rush. Put off less important activities.**
- ❖ **Listen to your body. Rest when you need to.**
- ❖ **Use tips from “How to manage your Fatigue” patient guide**
- ❖ **Take care of your body:**
 - ✓ Eat well and stay hydrated
 - ✓ Exercise. Be active. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days. Start slowly and go at your own pace.
 - ✓ Improve your sleep.

Mental Fatigue



A small number of people will notice problems with memory and concentration.

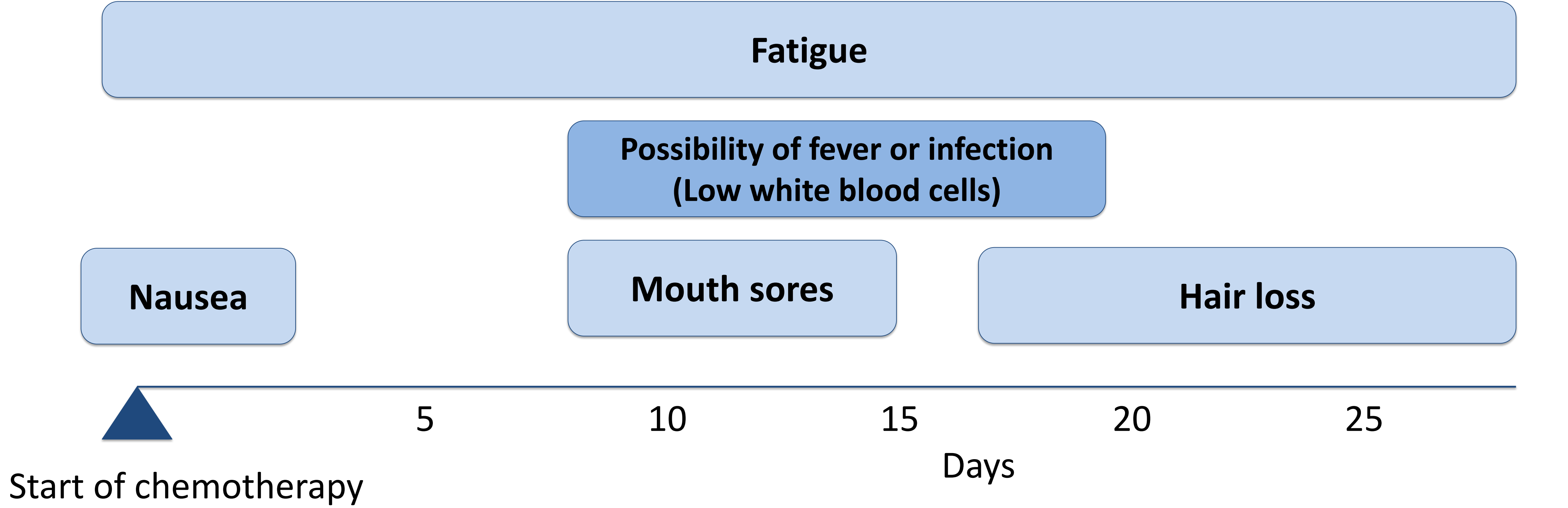
It is unclear how chemotherapy affects the brain.

Tips on Managing

- ✓ Plan activities that require concentration for the time of the day you feel the most rested.
- ✓ Make lists to help keep track of things.
- ✓ Ask family members or friends to help by: listening, taking notes, and asking questions at appointments.

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**



Sexual Changes

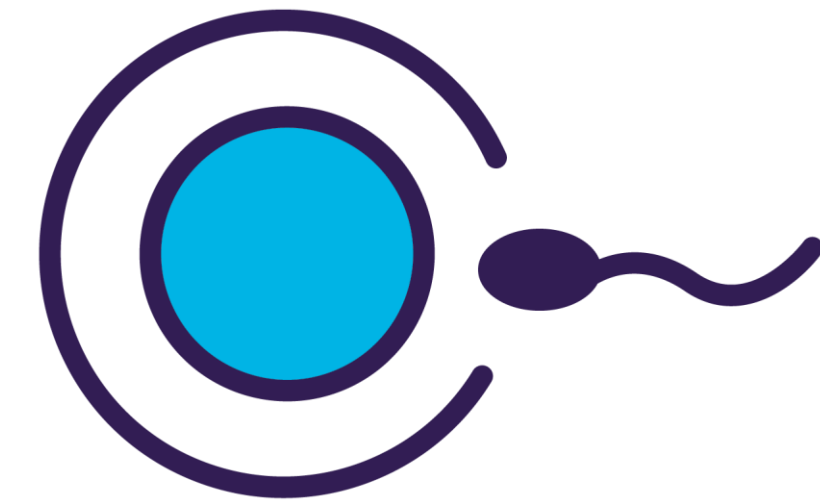


- Physical and emotional changes during chemotherapy can cause sexual side effects
- Common side effects: loss of desire, painful intercourse, changes in orgasm or erection

Tips on Managing

- ✓ 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**
- ✓ Ask for a referral to the Cancer Centre Sexual Health Clinic

Fertility Changes



- 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.

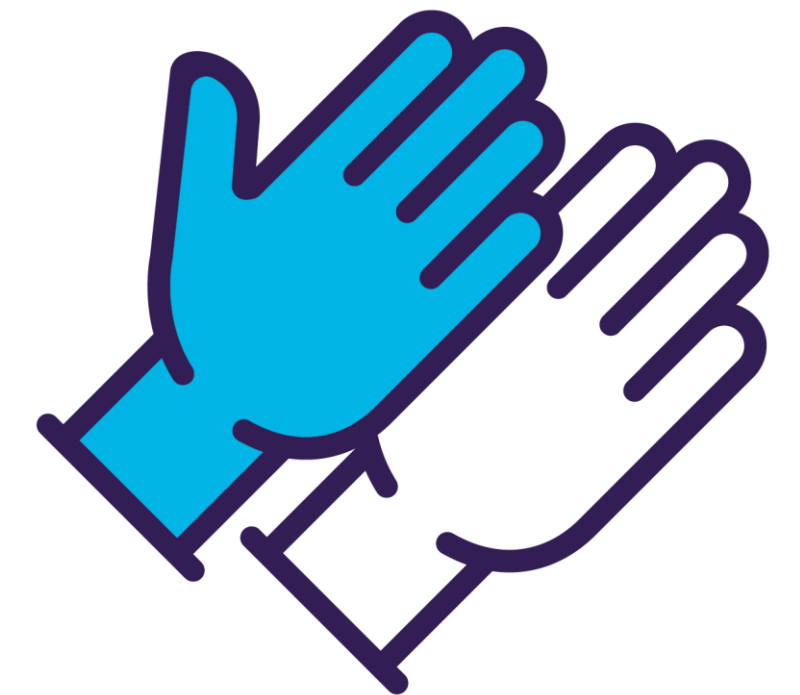
Safe Handling of Your Bodily Fluids

When: for 7 days after each chemotherapy treatment

Bodily fluids: urine, vomit, stool, blood, semen and vaginal fluid

Safety Tips

- ✓ Flush the toilet twice after use, with the lid down
- ✓ Sit on the toilet when urinating
- ✓ Wear gloves if cleaning up or handling soiled items
- ✓ Double bag **soiled** (has fluids on it) disposable items
- ✓ 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





What to expect during your chemotherapy treatment

Cancer Centre Appointments

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

Clinic (doctor)
visits

Treatment
Visits



Clinic Visit



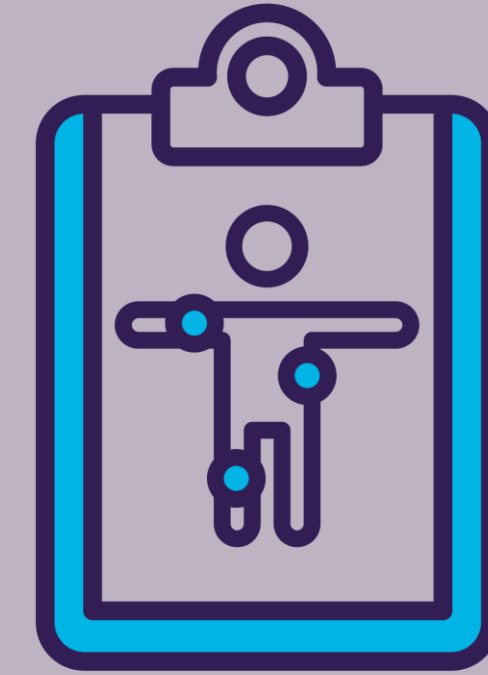
During this visit you will usually:

- ✓ **Arrive 45 minutes before your appointment time for blood work.**
- ✓ Get blood work done
- ✓ Complete the “Your Symptoms Matter” questionnaire
- ✓ Be assessed by your Nurse and Doctor

At this visit you should:

- ✓ Tell your team about how you have been doing and explain any side effects that you may be experiencing
- ✓ Ask your questions or discuss your concerns
- ✓ Bring a notebook to write down important information

Your Symptoms Matter



- You need to complete a symptom assessment self-questionnaire 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

Step 1: Register and get hospital ID bracelet

Step 2: Wait in treatment area waiting room

What will happen while chemotherapy is given?

- Sit in a recliner chair
- Nurse will start your IV (if required)
- Pre-medications may be given
- Chemotherapy infusion will start
 - Most patients do not feel pain or anything unusual. If you do, tell your nurse right away
- IV will be disconnected
- You may be given a prescription for medications to help with side effects

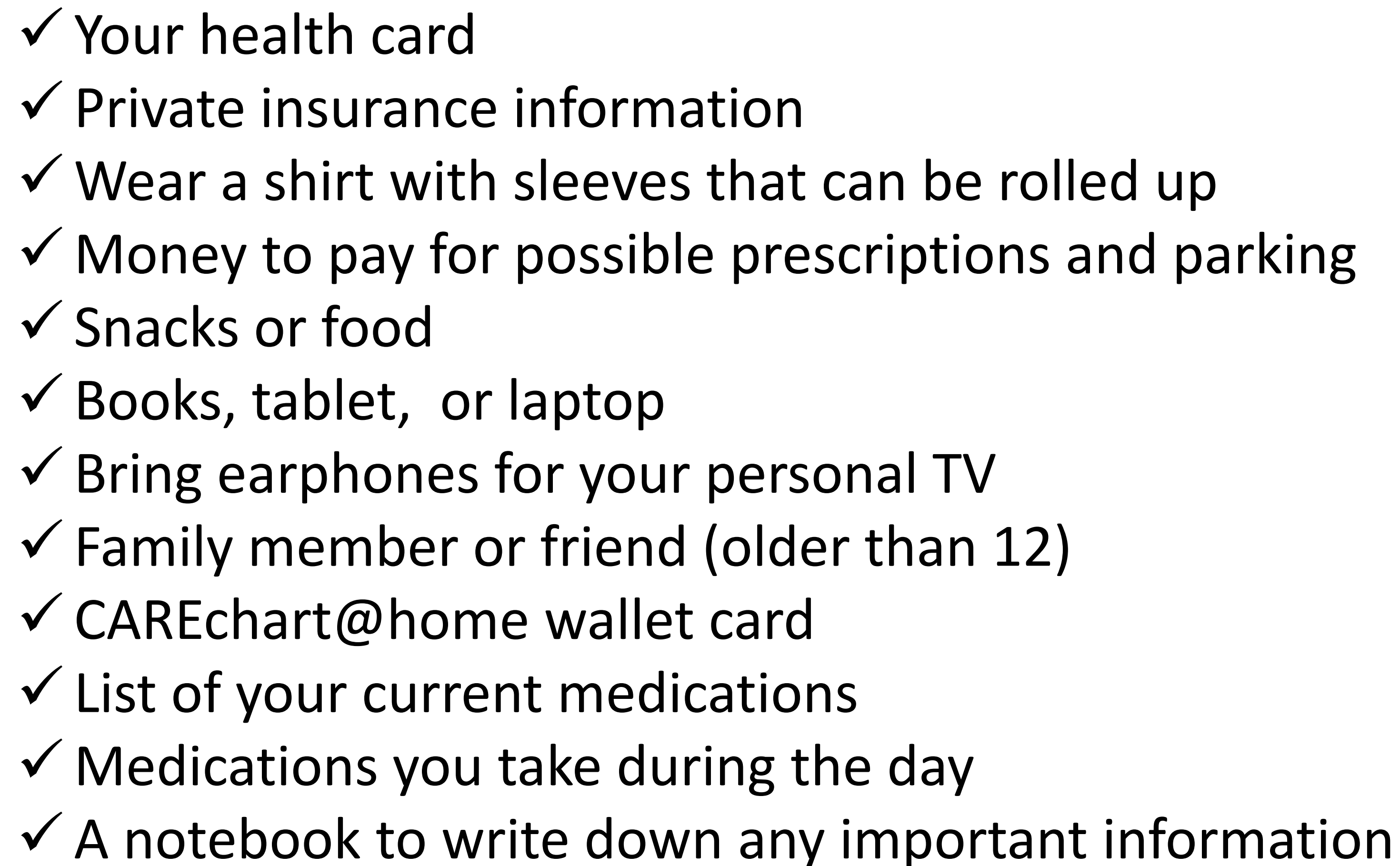


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Your First Treatment

- You have likely already had your bloodwork drawn prior to this visit.
- The registration clerk will phone you three days prior to your appointment date with your chair time. You can ask the clerk how long you should plan to be here.
- Bring a family member or friend
- Have someone available to drive you home after your treatment.
- You will see a pharmacist on this day.
- Eat a light meal prior to your treatment (breakfast or lunch).

What to Bring to Treatment Visits

- 
- ✓ Your health card
 - ✓ Private insurance information
 - ✓ Wear a shirt with sleeves that can be rolled up
 - ✓ Money to pay for possible prescriptions and parking
 - ✓ Snacks or food
 - ✓ Books, tablet, or laptop
 - ✓ Bring earphones for your personal TV
 - ✓ Family member or friend (older than 12)
 - ✓ CAREchart@home wallet card
 - ✓ List of your current medications
 - ✓ Medications you take during the day
 - ✓ A notebook to write down any important information

Paying for Drugs

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 coordinator** or **social workers** can answer your questions (contact information in the guidebook)

A collection of medical icons in the top-left corner, including a stethoscope, syringe, DNA helix, test tubes, a pill, a heart, a glucose meter, a first aid kit, a pill bottle, and a heart rate monitor.

Chemotherapy Closer to Home

If you are treated in Kingston, it may be possible to receive your chemotherapy and other supportive treatments in:

- ✓ Napanee
- ✓ Brockville
- ✓ Perth

Ask your nurse or
doctor for more
information

Cancer Clinical Research

- Taking part in a cancer clinical research study may be an option for people at different places in their cancer journey
- The standard cancer treatments used today were made and tested in clinical research studies years ago.
- If you are interested in taking part in a clinical research study talk to a member of your cancer care team or email CC-ClinicalTrials@kingstonhsc.ca



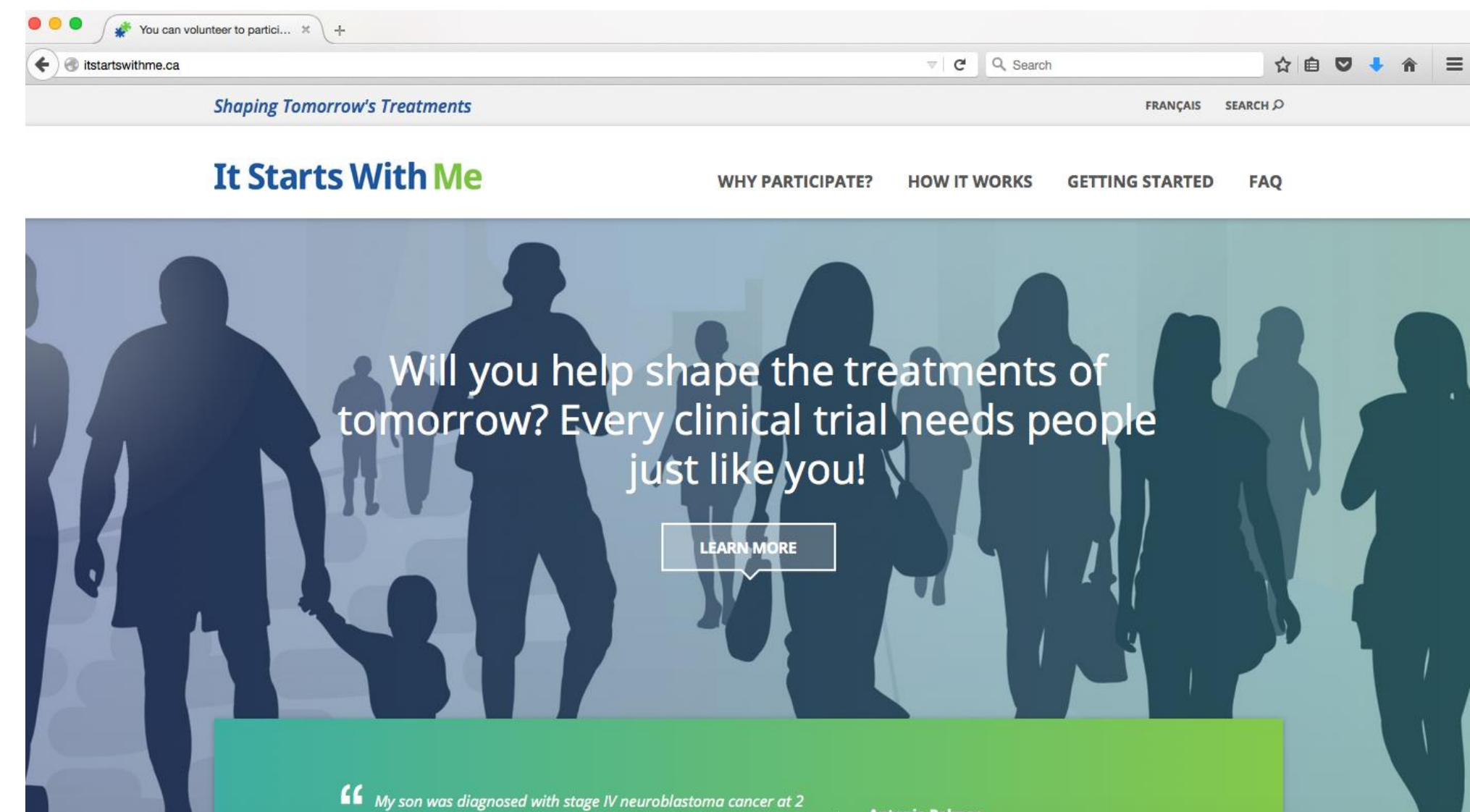
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Cancer Clinical Research

- Learn how clinical trials shape our future patient care: <http://itstartswithme.ca/>
- Learn about the Canadian Cancer Clinical Trials Network: <http://3ctn.ca/>



Speak to hospital staff or volunteers wearing this button



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Services and Resources



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



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Questions?

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