CHEMOTHERAPY & YOU

A TREATMENT OVERVIEW
IN THIS VIDEO:

- What is cancer?
- How is it treated?
- How does chemotherapy work and how is it given?
- What are the common side effects associated with chemotherapy and what can be done to prevent or manage them?
- What resources are available to help you?
WHAT IS CANCER?

- A broad term to describe many diseases
- Usually named according to the part of the body where it first starts to grow
- If a cancer starts growing in one area of the body but spreads to another, it is said to have “metastasized”
http://ottawahospital.libguides.com/cancer_patient/
Information Resources for Cancer Patients and Families: Welcome

In memory of Ninon Bourque

Welcome

This is a guide to information that can help you to better understand and treatment and how to live with the disease. It will add to the information you will get from your healthcare professionals. This is only not intended to be used for the diagnosis or treatment of a health problem or as a substitute for consulting a licensed medical

Cancers

- Bladder Cancer
- Bone and Soft Tissue Sarcoma
- Brain Cancer
- Breast Cancer
- Cervical Cancer
- Colorectal Cancer
- Esophageus Cancer
- Gallbladder and Biliary Cancer
- Head and Neck Cancer
- Kidney Cancer
- Leukemia

Making Difficult Decisions

Treatment

Living with Cancer

General Finances

Your Cancer Journey

Person-Centred Care

First Nations, Inuit and Metis

The future of healthcare resides in Person-Centred Care (PCC)
TREATMENT FOR CANCER
WHEN IS CHEMOTHERAPY GIVEN?

- Can be given before or after surgery, or both
- Can be given in combination with radiation therapy or on its own
- Your oncologist will discuss the various treatment options specific to your cancer with you
HOW DOES CHEMOTHERAPY WORK?

- Given through a vein (intravenously, or “IV”)
- Some chemotherapy is available in pill form (oral)
- Once administered, chemotherapy travels through your bloodstream and reaches all parts of your body
- Chemotherapy interferes with rapidly dividing cells
  - Cancer cells
  - Healthy cells may be affected as well → side effects
- Please visit our patient information portal for information on oral chemotherapy
SIDE EFFECTS OF CHEMOTHERAPY

- Many advances in the prevention and management of chemotherapy related side-effects
- At each appointment you will be asked to report your symptoms at one of our computer stations
  - Will help to inform your healthcare team as to what symptoms you are experiencing and their severity
- Your healthcare team is here to help!
BONE MARROW SUPPRESSION

- Bone marrow is the spongy material inside your bones and produces white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets
- White blood cells (WBC) protect your body from infection
- Neutrophils are the most common type of WBC and fight bacteria
- Chemotherapy can interfere with the bone marrow’s ability to produce these cells
- A drop in the normal number of neutrophils usually occurs within 7-10 days after chemotherapy treatment, but can recover within 1 week
- If your WBC count drops as a result of chemotherapy, you are at higher risk of developing infections
REDUCE YOUR RISK OF INFECTION

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or alcohol-based gel (Purell)
- Keep your mouth clean
- Avoid people who have contagious illnesses (like a cold or flu)
- Have a friend or family member clean pet waste
IF YOU DEVELOP A FEVER

- If you start to feel unwell (especially in the 7-10 days after chemotherapy) take your temperature
- If your temperature is higher than 38º Celsius or 100.4º Fahrenheit, call the Patient Support Line immediately
- After hours and statutory holidays, proceed to the Emergency Department
- Do not take Tylenol®, Advil®, Aspirin®, or any other fever-reducing medications until seen by a healthcare provider
- **DO NOT IGNORE A FEVER**
FEVER CARD

Patient:
If you are receiving chemotherapy and have a fever at or above 38.0 °C/100.4 °F (with or without chills), seek immediate medical attention at the nearest hospital.

This may be a cancer EMERGENCY

Pt Name: ____________________________
Oncologist: ________________________
Chemo Medications: 

When Chemo Cycle initiated:
Date #1: ___________ Date #2: ___________
Date #3: ___________ Date #4: ___________
Date #5: ___________ Date #6: ___________

Notes/Comments: ____________________________
THE FEVER CARD

- Present the fever card to Emergency Department staff on arrival
- Alerts them that you are a cancer patient and require urgent medical attention
- Provides instructions for the Emergency Department Staff on how to manage fevers in a cancer patient
- May include:
  - Blood and urine tests to determine any source of infection
  - Antibiotics
OTHER SIGNS OF INFECTION

- Areas of redness or tenderness
- Rash
- Sore mouth or throat
- Cough that produces mucous
- Frequent urination
- If you experience any of these symptoms, please call the Patient Support Line immediately
- After hours and statutory holidays, please proceed to the Emergency Department
LOW RED BLOOD CELL COUNT

- Red blood cells transport oxygen throughout your body
- Chemotherapy may lower your red blood cell count
- When the number or red cells is low, less oxygen is transported
- This may cause you to feel weak, tired, dizzy, experience shortness of breath, or headaches
LOW PLATELET COUNT

- Platelets help the body to stop bleeding by forming clots
- Can be affected by chemotherapy
- Low platelets may cause bleeding from the nose or gums, blood in urine or stool, red spots on the skin
- Avoid taking medications containing Aspirin® (as advised by your physician)
- Take care when handling sharp objects
- Use a soft toothbrush and floss gently
  - **HEMATOLOGY Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy should not floss. Please speak to your nurse for further discussion.**
- If you experience unusual bruising or bleeding, call the Patient Support Line immediately
your treatment. This will avoid delays in getting test results.

Q. WHAT happens if there is a 2 or 3-day weekend?
A. If your chemotherapy treatment is on a Monday, you can have your blood work drawn on the Friday before.

If there is a long weekend approaching, you can have your blood work drawn on the previous business day. For example, if the holiday falls on a Monday, Friday’s blood work is accepted for a Tuesday treatment. (This does not apply to weekly chemotherapy).

Q. If I am on weekly chemotherapy, when should I have my blood work done?
Please have your blood work drawn within 24 hours before your chemotherapy appointment.

Q. I am on the Chemotherapy Home Infusion Pump Program (CHIPP). Is there something I need to know about my blood work?
A. Yes. Completed at TOH Lab - you need to have your blood work drawn the day before treatment before 1200 noon.

Completed at lab other than TOH - you need to have your blood work drawn the day before your treatment before 9:00 am

Q. I am not on chemotherapy. When do I need to get my blood work done?
A. Please have your blood work done no sooner than one week before your return appointment to see the doctor.

Q. I need to get tumor marker levels done (e.g., PSA, Ca-125, CEA). How soon before my appointment with the doctor should this be done?
A. Such levels should be taken at least one week before. This will ensure the doctor has the levels back in time to meet with you.

Q. What are the lab hours?
A. IGFC – 0745 - 1530 hours
General – 0730-1615 hours
(Monday to Friday)

TOHCC Main Phone Number: 777-7770

EXTENSIONS
The Ottawa Hospital Cancer Centre, General Campus

MODULE A
Reception
Extension 70513 or 70079 or 70668

MODULE B
Reception
Extension 70088 or 70067 or 70068

MODULE C
Reception
Extension 70091 or 70082

Module D
Reception
Extension 70071 or 70070

The Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Program at the Irving Greenberg Family Cancer Centre

Module E
Reception
Extension 25229

Module F
Reception
Extension, TBA
HAIR LOSS

- Not all chemotherapy drugs cause hair loss
- Hair loss will usually occur 2-3 weeks after your first treatment
- Hair loss is a temporary side effect
- Consider cutting hair short before beginning chemotherapy
- Consider shopping for a wig so that its colour and style can be matched to your own hair
- Consider wearing a head covering for warmth
- Avoid harsh hair care products
2 HOURS IS ALL IT TAKES
Our free workshop can help you take control of how you look and feel during treatment.

FIND A WORKSHOP

Guyline Bactien
The Look Good Feel Better workshop was one of the high points of my life. I felt understood and that I was not alone.

Rosetta Weston
There was so much positive energy in the room.

Donna McGrath
I didn’t feel I needed the workshop, but when I got there, I found the room full of women who were going through exactly what I was going through.

Cynthia Mulligan
For the first time since finding a lump, I was sitting with other women who knew a little embarrassing but it was also good to know I

Line Rocheleau
I thanked my mother the day before the workshop...
MOUTH SORES

- The lining of your mouth is made up of tiny, rapidly dividing cells which are sensitive to chemotherapy
- If major dental work is planned, please check with your oncologist or nurse first
- Rinse your mouth frequently (after each brushing and as needed)
  - Combine 1 teaspoon of salt, 1 teaspoon of baking soda and 4 cups of water. Do not refrigerate.
- Use a soft toothbrush
- Avoid commercial mouthwashes that contain alcohol
IF YOU HAVE MOUTH SORES AVOID FOODS AND BEVERAGES THAT ARE:

- Rough, hard, or crunchy
- Abrasive
- Spicy
- Salty
- Acidic
- Extreme in temperature (very hot or very cold)

If you see white spots on the inside of your cheeks and a coating is present on your tongue, call the Patient Support Line for assistance.
NAUSEA AND VOMITING

- Take your nausea medication as prescribed by your oncologist
- Do not wait to see if nausea gets worse
- Eating frequent, small, bland meals during the day may alleviate nausea
- Drink 6-8 glasses of fluids a day
- Limit coffee and alcohol
CONSTITUTION

- Some chemotherapy, opioids (pain medication), and nausea medications can cause constipation
- If you are taking opioids (pain medication), ask your oncologist or nurse if eating more fiber is right for you
- Remain active when possible
- If you have not had a bowel movement in 3 days, please contact the Patient Support Line for assistance
- Laxatives and stool softeners maybe required
- Do not use suppositories or enemas unless advised to by a doctor
- If you have a severely bloated stomach, contact the Patient Support Line
DIARRHEA

- Some chemotherapy, bowel surgery, radiation, and antibiotics may cause diarrhea
- Try to eat foods low in fiber
- Avoid fried, greasy foods, dairy products (if lactose intolerant), and foods that cause gas
- Laxatives should not be taken
- Call the Patient Support Line if you have more than 6 episodes of diarrhea in 24 hours
FATIGUE

- The most common side effect of chemotherapy
- Take short naps
- Balance rest with physical activity
- Ask for help
Some chemotherapy drugs can damage nerves causing symptoms like:

- Hearing loss
- Numbness, burning, tingling or pins and needles in your hands and feet
- Muscle weakness
- Constipation
- Difficulty urinating

Symptoms are usually temporary. Make sure you notify your healthcare team if you experience any of these symptoms.
Venenous Thromboembolism (VTE)

- People with cancer have a higher risk of developing blood clots
- VTE refers to a blood clot in a vein
- 2 types of VTE:
  - Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT):
    - forms in deep veins (legs, pelvis, arm)
    - higher risk for patients with a central venous catheter
  - Pulmonary Embolism (PE):
    - Blood clot that has travelled through the bloodstream from a deep vein to the lungs
SYMPTOMS OF A BLOOD CLOT

- Symptoms of a Possible DVT
  - Sudden or recent swelling of one leg or arm
  - Unexplained pain or tenderness of one leg or arm
  - Skin may be warm to touch or discoloured (red, purple, or blue)

- Symptoms of a Possible PE
  - Recent or sudden shortness of breath or breathlessness
  - Sharp chest pain or upper back pain, especially when breathing in
  - Light-headed or coughing up blood

DVT and PE are EMERGENCIES. If you experience any of the above symptoms, please GO to the EMERGENCY ROOM and SEEK MEDICAL CARE IMMEDIATELY
What can you do to prevent blood clots

- Stay active
- Don’t smoke or stop smoking
- Maintain a normal body weight as much as possible
- Drink plenty of fluids
- If travelling, wear compression stockings and/or get up and walk frequently
**SUN EXPOSURE**

- Chemotherapy can make you more sensitive to the sun
- Wear sunscreen with a minimum SPF 30
- Cover up when outdoors
- Wear a hat
- Stay in shaded areas
- Remain well hydrated
INTIMACY AND SEX

- Chemotherapy can be present in semen or vaginal secretions for 48 hours up to a week
- If you engage in sexual activity - wear a condom (regardless of which partner is receiving chemotherapy)
- Prevent pregnancy during cancer treatment
- Feel free to ask your healthcare provider if you have any concerns about sex or intimacy
Feelings of anxiety or depression are normal

The Psychosocial Oncology Program has many resources and caring professionals who can help

Please don’t hesitate to talk to us
PSYCHOSOCIAL ONCOLOGY PROGRAM (PSOP)

- PSOP is a multidisciplinary team available by referral to provide support throughout your cancer journey
  - **Social Work**: provides support services as well as individual, couple and family counseling
  - **Psychology**: treatment recommendations and psychotherapy
  - **Psychiatry**: medication management and/or psychotherapy
  - **Physiotherapy**: maximizes function through interventions to help manage pain, increase movement and mobility
  - **Nutrition Services (dietician)**: for interventions related to nutrition and symptoms management (weight loss, nausea, difficulty/pain swallowing, bowel issues, etc)
  - **Speech-Language Pathology**: assessment, treatment, education and counseling for speech, voice, and/or swallowing disorders
FOR MORE TIPS ON MANAGING YOUR SYMPTOMS

Symptom Management

In memory of Ninon Bourque

Welcome • Reducing Cancer Risk • Screening/Early Detection • Cancer • Making Difficult Decisions • Treatment • Living with Cancer • General Finances

Key Resources

• How to Manage your Symptoms: guides for patients

Websites with Valuable Information

• Cancer Care Ontario
• Canadian Cancer Society: managing symptoms
• National Cancer Institute (NCI)
• Cancer Research (UK)

Books of interest available at your public library or local bookstores:

100 Questions and Answers about Cancer Symptoms and Cancer Treatment Side Effects
by Joanne Framis and Louis Tyrer

Report your symptoms

Reporting your cancer-related symptoms tells us how you are feeling. It helps to start the conversation so we can help you to manage your symptoms.

Symptom assessment is done at every Cancer Centre across Ontario. The use of symptom management tools can give a patient a voice in their cancer journey. Video: Allowing the Patient’s Voice to Help Guide their Care

You will be asked to report your symptoms at one of our computers regularly. Please read this booklet to know why it is so important for you to report your symptoms. Tell us about your symptoms

You can click here to access Cancer Care Ontario’s interactive Symptom Assessment and Collection (ESAC) tool to report your symptoms from home.

The symptom management questions or also called the Edmonton Symptom Assessment System (ESAS) tool is also available to cancer patients to report symptoms. This tool is available online in many languages. Click here to access the
tool.

Symptom Management

• Talking to Children about Cancer
• Diarrhea: see Nutrition information
• Dry Mouth: see Nutrition information
• Gas and Bloating: see Nutrition information
• Nausea & Vomiting: see Nutrition information

Oral Care

• Tips to help you manage your cancer symptoms: Mouth care
Reducing Cancer Risk

Introduction

Quitting smoking, participating in cancer screening and keeping a healthy body weight are three ways you can reduce your own cancer risk. To find out more about your cancer risk of breast, colorectal, cervical, kidney and lung cancer, go to MyCancerIQ.ca.
BODY FLUIDS AND WASTES AFTER CHEMOTHERAPY

- Chemotherapy can remain in your system for 48 hours up to 7 days after your last treatment
- Body fluids such as urine, vomit, blood, stool, semen and vaginal secretions must be handled with care
- Flush toilet with the lid down, flushing twice.
- Keep lid down when not in use to prevent pets from drinking from the bowl
- Soiled linens or clothing should be washed alone
- Cutlery and dishes can be used in the usual manner
QUESTIONS SPECIFICALLY ABOUT YOUR CHEMOTHERAPY?

• You will receive drug specific teaching, one-on-one, with your nurse on your first day of your chemotherapy

• We encourage you to write down any questions you may have about your treatment, medication, possible side effects etc with you to your first chemotherapy appointment
TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR STAY MORE COMFORTABLE

- Bring small snacks
- Beverages must have lids
- Keep foods away from chemo bags and red bins
- Wash your hands before eating
- Please avoid bringing strong smelling foods
- Please bring only one family member or friend
- Children are not allowed in the treatment areas
- Enjoy our free Wi-Fi

The nurse administering your chemotherapy will be wearing protective equipment (ie. Gown, gloves, face shield)
PATIENT SUPPORT LINE (MEDICAL ONCOLOGY PATIENTS)

Open Monday through Friday 9 am to 4 pm

When to call:

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Inability to drink
- Diarrhea
- Blood in your urine or stool

- New swelling
- Discoloration, pain, or change in temperature of legs, arms or neck
- New or worsening pain
- Mouth sores
- Redness, swelling, pain at the chemotherapy injection site
- Other concerns

***Malignant Hematology patients only***

HEMATOLOGY Patients Undergoing Chemotherapy must call the number provided to them by their Hematology Team.
OTHER MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Call 911 if you experience:

▶ New or worsening shortness of breath
▶ Sudden or new chest pain
▶ Decreased level of consciousness
▶ Sudden, new bleeding
▶ New back pain with difficulty walking
THANK YOU FOR WATCHING