

COPING WITH CHEMOTHERAPY

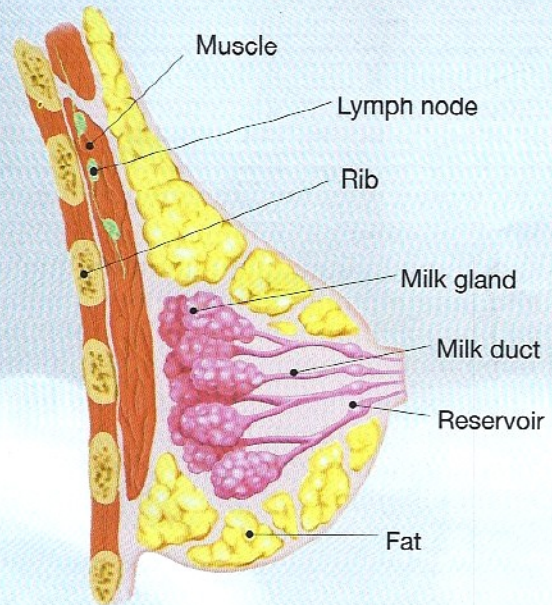
WHAT IS CHEMOTHERAPY?

Chemotherapy is the treatment of cancer with strong chemicals or drugs in order to destroy the cancer cells by interfering with their growth or by preventing them from reproducing.

Your oncologist will select the combination of drugs that are known to be effective for the type of cancer being treated.

Chemotherapy can be used alone or in combination with surgery and/or radiation and/or targeted therapy ("non-chemotherapy agent"). Sometimes drugs are taken orally or intravenously. The drugs enter the bloodstream and are transported throughout the body to wherever cancer cells are growing. For this reason, chemotherapy may reach cancer cells that are missed by surgery or radiation treatment.

The treatment's duration will vary depending upon the type of cancer you have, the drugs that are used, and how your body responds to them.



WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

The extent of side effects you may experience will vary depending on the type of drugs you are taking and how your body reacts. Your doctor will explain the side effects that are most likely to occur and help you to cope with them. Be sure to keep your doctor informed of any reactions you may experience.

NAUSEA AND VOMITING

A common side effect of chemotherapy is nausea and vomiting, which may be controlled or lessened by a range of medicines. You should also try to avoid fried or fatty foods and try to eat and drink slowly. Do not lie down flat for at least two hours after a meal.

HAIR LOSS

Hair loss can occur on all parts of the body, not just the scalp. In most cases, hair grows back after therapy has concluded and hair sometimes begins to grow back while treatments are still being given.

FATIGUE

Chemotherapy may temporarily cause a condition called anaemia, low red blood cell count, that may make you feel weak and tired. Get plenty of rest, sleep more at night and rest during the day. Limit activities and try to eat more foods rich in iron.

Chemotherapy can also affect other blood cells called platelets, causing you to bruise or bleed more easily. Be sure to report signs of bleeding to your doctor.

INFECTIONS

Chemotherapy may also reduce the number of white blood cells, the cells that fight infection. Try to avoid contact with people who have a cold, the flu or any other contagious diseases and also wash your hands frequently during the day.

OUTLOOK

The side effects of chemotherapy may be uncomfortable, but most side effects are temporary and gradually disappear when treatment ends.

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