

National Cancer Institute

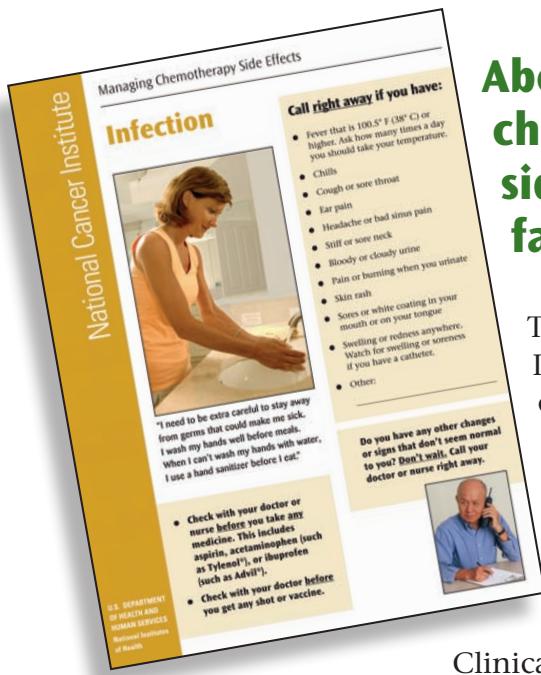
Helping Providers Help Their Patients

Using the Chemotherapy Side Effects Fact Sheets

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
AND HUMAN SERVICES

National Institutes of Health





About the chemotherapy side effects facts sheets

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) worked closely with health care providers and patients at cancer centers across the country, and with providers at the National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Clinical Center, to develop this chemotherapy educational series. The series includes 18 free fact sheets to help patients manage side effects and a pamphlet about chemotherapy.

The one-page fact sheets offer practical tips to strengthen your patients' understanding of, and ability to prevent or manage, side effects. The chemotherapy pamphlet describes what chemotherapy is and how it works.

Easy-to-understand language, engaging quotes, photographs, and questions can also help your patients understand and actively participate in their care. The information is intended to complement your patients' individualized consultation with you, their health care provider.

See the last two pages of this booklet for a list of topics and information on how to order these handouts.

Research shows that early side-effect management and pretreatment information may help decrease patients' fears and anxiety and increase understanding of treatment.*

* Hofman, et al. 2004. Cancer patients' expectations of experiencing treatment-related side effects. *Cancer*. 101(4):851–857.

Here is what providers said about these handouts during pilot testing:

“The materials address all of the issues patients are concerned about in an easy to follow format.”

“These handouts hit the highlights patients need to know about at the beginning of treatment. And it's nice to have one sheet to give people.”

“The information is user-friendly and culturally sensitive. I'll hand these out to my patients.”

“When I was going through them, I thought—I could teach from this. I could take this in and sit down with my patient, and we could just go through this.”

Tips on using the chemotherapy fact sheets in a clinical setting:

1. Hand out the relevant fact sheets to your patient.

Talk about the information on the fact sheet while the patient is in your office.

- Discussing these fact sheets during an office visit can increase your patient's likelihood of reading and using them at home.
- When patients understand what to expect during treatment and the actions to take, they will have less anxiety about side effects.
- The fact sheets can be given to patients in the waiting room or during discussions about chemotherapy and specific side effects.



2. Highlight or circle important information and action steps.

Use a highlighter or a colored pen to draw attention to key information and action steps on each fact sheet.

- This simple act can increase your patient's adherence to the actions you would like him or her to take.

3. Use the teach-back technique.

For important behaviors and information, ask your patients to share in their own words what they learn.

- Confirming patient understanding through the teach-back technique has been shown to improve patient recall and comprehension.
- Applying the teach-back technique during the patient consult can help avoid misunderstanding. It can also reduce the time spent educating patients during subsequent visits.



Chemotherapy Side Effects Fact Sheets

- Anemia
- Appetite Changes
- Bleeding Problems
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue (Feeling weak and very tired)
- Hair Loss (Alopecia)
- Infection
- Memory Changes
- Mouth and Throat Changes
- Nausea and Vomiting
- Nerve Changes
- Pain
- Sexual and Fertility Changes in Men
- Sexual and Fertility Changes in Women
- Skin and Nail Changes
- Swelling (Fluid retention)
- Urination Changes

Anemia

"I told my doctor I was very tired. My doctor did a blood test to rule out anemia. Now I am getting treatment for the anemia, and I have a lot more energy!"

Pain

"I was worried about getting addicted to pain medicine. Then I talked to my doctor. We worked out a plan. It's important part of pain control. So now I take my pain medicine on time and am able to enjoy life more!"

Memory Changes

"My nurse said that during treatment it may be hard to concentrate. I put important dates on the calendar. I also keep notes on the door to help me remember things."

Nerve Changes

"My fingers and toes hurt a lot. I try to keep them warm. I always wear gloves. I always wear shoes."

Call your doctor or nurse if you feel:

- Dizzy or faint
- Short of breath
- Very weak and tired
- Your heart beating very fast

Appetite Changes

"Many days I'm just not hungry. I find it easier to eat 5 small meals, instead of a big meal each day. My nurse told me about foods that can help me keep up my strength."

Sexual and Fertility Changes in Men

"I was worried about how treatment could affect my sex life and ability to have children. It helps to talk with my doctor before treatment to learn more."

Fatigue

"I was so tired. It was hard to do even simple things. My nurse tried to stay as active as possible. I found that taking short walks each morning gave me more energy during the day."

Nausea and Vomiting

"I take medicine to help me feel sick to my stomach or throw up. I had to try a few different kinds of medicine before I found one that worked!"

What are nausea and vomiting?

Nausea is when you feel like you want to vomit. You may feel queasy, have upset stomach, like you are going to throw up. You may feel like you are going to vomit.

Call your doctor or nurse if the medicine is not working and you have nausea or vomiting.

- Talk with your doctor or nurse to see if there are other ways to treat your nausea or vomiting.
- If the medicine makes you sick after eating well:

 - Take small sips of clear fluids during the day.
 - Eat a light meal and snacks during the day, instead of a big meal.

- Stay away from some foods.

 - Eat low fat meals, eat slowly, or eat smaller meals if you feel sick after eating well.
 - If the taste of foods bothers you, ask your doctor to cook for you. Then let the food cool down before you eat it.

- Have enough to eat and drink.

 - Take small sips of clear fluids during the day.
 - Eat a light meal and snacks during the day, instead of a big meal.

- Choose foods from the list on the other side of this sheet.

Chemotherapy Treatment Pamphlet

- Understanding Chemotherapy

Order the chemotherapy side effects fact sheets in tear-off pads of 50 sheets or as single copies:

- Call the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER).
- Or visit us online at www.cancer.gov/publications.

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Understanding Chemotherapy

What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy is a cancer treatment that uses drugs to kill cancer cells. It is also called "chemo".

Today, there are many different kinds of chemotherapy. Some are given by injection, some are given orally. Some are given during treatment, others are given after treatment. Some are given every day, others are given every few days. You will most likely feel better in days you don't get chemotherapy.

Have all the blood tests your doctor orders. Blood tests help your doctor take care of your health.

"As soon as I got past the shock of being told I had cancer, I wanted to know more. I had lots of questions about the kind of cancer I have and how it's treated. Now I've finished my first round of chemo, and I feel very hopeful."

Read this pamphlet to learn about chemotherapy. Take it with you to your doctor's visit to fill in together. This will help you share what you learn with family and friends.

HOW TO ORDER

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