

Chemotherapy Tip Sheet

During treatment you need to “listen” to your body. This will help you get the best result from chemotherapy with the least side effects. It is important to talk to your doctor or nurse about ALL of the side effects you have.

1. **Rest**... You may feel tired. Have rest periods each day. Keep your muscles strong with daily exercise. Walking will increase your strength.
2. **Drink** plenty of fluids each day. This means a cup of fluid every hour. Try to drink fluids with lots of nutrition in them. (juices, milkshakes, soups, jello, sports drinks). This will help your kidneys to work well. You may not feel like eating, but drinking is VERY IMPORTANT!
3. **Eat** high protein foods: fish, chicken, beans, pork, and beef. Eat high calorie foods: milkshakes, ice cream, sauces, Carnation Instant Breakfast, Ensure, and Boost. These foods replace the energy your body is using to fight the cancer cells. Stay away from fatty, fried, and greasy foods. Your appetite will come back in 2-6 weeks after your chemotherapy is over.
4. For **nausea**, take the anti-nausea medicine as directed. Sometimes you may have to take more anti-nausea medicine about a half-hour before you eat. Try smaller, more frequent meals, or snacks, instead of 3 big meals. Try cold or room temperature foods. It's a good idea to let the “smell” of hot food go away first. Try different foods to see what tastes good.
5. You may be constipated or have diarrhea. For both, drink plenty of fluids. For **constipation**, increase the amount of fiber in your diet: bran, whole-wheat breads and cereals, vegetables, and fruit.

For **diarrhea**, try the BRAT diet: bananas, rice, applesauce, and toast. Stay away from high-fiber foods; dairy products like milk, cheese or ice cream; alcohol; and caffeine.

6. Practice good **mouth care** after eating and at bedtime using a soft bristle toothbrush. Use a salt water gargle at least 4 times a day. Mix 1 teaspoon of salt in a quart of tap water and mix a new batch every day. Look in your mouth daily to see if there are any changes.

7. Take your **temperature** once a day in the evening. The biggest drop in blood counts will usually occur about 7-10 days after your chemotherapy started. During this time, you are at risk for infection. A rise in your temperature may mean infection. *See Neutropenia sheet*
8. You may have **hair loss**. Getting a short haircut before you begin to lose your hair may help. Ask your doctor for a prescription for a wig. Try scarves, hats or turbans. Use sunscreen to protect your scalp. Your hair will start to grow back after your last treatment.
9. You may have **numbness, tingling, or pain** in your hands or feet. Be safe by wearing shoes and gloves for housework, cooking and gardening. You may want to ask your doctor about taking a Vitamin B-complex with folate.
10. Having **sex** is fine as long as you are not at risk for bleeding or infection. Snuggling and hugging are always okay and encouraged! Continue to use birth control or ask your doctor about birth control.
11. **Avoid large crowds** and close contact with people who are sick.

Call your doctor if you have:

- ✓ **Vomiting not controlled by your anti-nausea medicine.**
- ✓ **Diarrhea more than 4 times a day not controlled by anti-diarrhea medicine.**
- ✓ **Constipation greater than 3 days.**
- ✓ **Sore throat, pain in your gums, or white patches on any part of your mouth.**
- ✓ **Temperature over 100.5 F, chills, or tiredness that keeps getting worse.**
- ✓ **Any unexplained bleeding or bruising...from your skin, gums, or sputum (what you cough up) *See Thrombocytopenia sheet***