

Self-care After Chemotherapy

What to expect and how to manage symptoms

This handout for chemotherapy patients at UW Medical Center explains how to take care of yourself when you leave the hospital after having chemotherapy.

Nausea and Vomiting

You may have nausea and vomiting after going home. This may last for 3 to 5 days after the end of chemotherapy.

If you have nausea, there are medicines you can take to help you feel better. Depending on how severe your nausea is, you can take one or more of these medicines.

If you are taking medicines for nausea, take them as prescribed day and night until your symptoms improve. Make sure you drink fluids and eat healthful foods.

Constipation

You may have some constipation with chemotherapy. Your doctor will prescribe medicines to help ease constipation. Please take these medicines as prescribed until your bowels are working normally. Also remember to drink fluids and eat healthful foods.

Food Safety

It is very important to avoid eating any foods that could contain bacteria or fungus. To do this:

- Check the “use by” date on packaged foods. Do **not** eat foods that are expired.
- Wash all fresh foods well. Avoid raw fruits and vegetables when eating out.
- Cook vegetables and peel fruit before you eat them.



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Fatigue

Most patients feel *fatigued* (very tired) during their chemotherapy treatment. Try these things to help fatigue:

- Get rest and sleep at regular times.
- Stay active during the day so that you sleep better at night.
- Get regular exercise.
- Decide which activities are most important for each day.
- Be realistic about what you can and cannot do.

Infections

- **Call your doctor right away if you have fever or chills.**
- To avoid infections:
 - Wash your hands often.
 - Have contact **only** with people who are healthy. Ask people who are sick to visit when they are well.
 - Have people wash their hands when they come to visit.

Handling Body Fluids

You are in *precautions*. This means:

- Other people should **not** touch your body fluids (urine, vomit, blood, saliva, and sweat).
- If your caregivers need to help you with any body fluids, they should use gloves and then clean affected items or areas with warm soapy water.

Your precautions end on _____.

Month Day Year

Hair Loss

Many chemotherapy drugs cause hair loss. If you are going to lose your hair, it will usually start about 3 weeks after your first dose of chemotherapy.

There are resources to help you with hair loss. Ask your nurse or social worker if you need help finding these resources.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

6-Southeast: 206.598.4410

8-Southeast: 206.598.8300