

Beginning Chemotherapy

What to expect

Your treatments will begin up to 2 weeks after confirmation of your health insurance coverage for chemotherapy. Please read the following information to learn about chemotherapy treatments.

What happens after check-in and before starting treatment?

- Your current lab test results and physical assessment are reviewed.
- Based on your results and assessment, you may receive:
 - » Chemotherapy as planned.
 - » A different dose of the same drug.
 - » No treatment that day.
- The nurse orders the chemotherapy from the pharmacy.
- A specially trained pharmacist reviews the order for accuracy and completeness.
 - » Each pharmacist processes 1 order at a time so each order gets full attention.
 - » The pharmacist and pharmacy technician prepare your chemotherapy using a double-check system.
 - » Preparing your chemotherapy can take up to 1 hour.
- The pharmacy lets your nurse know your medicines are ready.
- Your nursing staff double-checks your chemotherapy.

Making sure your chemotherapy is safe and accurate takes time.

Taking oral therapies

Oral therapies, such as oral chemotherapy and targeted therapies, are just as effective as intravenous (IV) chemotherapy. Oral therapies also can have serious side effects. Taking your medicine exactly as prescribed is important. Also, be sure to know when and what side effects to report to your care team.

What about side effects?

Some side effects of oral chemotherapy and targeted therapies are similar to IV chemotherapy. However, other side effects can be very different. Your doctor or advanced practice clinician will give you more detailed information about which side effects to watch for.

How do I store the medicine?

- Keep medicine in a cool, dry place away from sun and moisture.
- Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep tablets in original container until ready to use. Do not mix or take the medicine with other pills.
- Keep medicine away from children or pets.

How do I safely give myself oral chemotherapy or targeted therapy at home?

- Call the clinic right away if you have any questions or want to talk about symptoms. We're here to help you.
- Take your medicine exactly as prescribed. Read all the information carefully.

- Be sure to check if the medicine needs to be taken with or without food. Follow the directions closely.
- Swallow tablets whole with a full glass of water. Do not crush or chew.
- Take your medicine on time.
- Give yourself the medicine whenever possible.
 - » If someone gives you the medicine, that person should wear gloves or avoid touching the medicine.
- Wash your hands after taking and handling medicine at home.
- If you vomit, do not repeat dose.
- Do not double the dose if you miss a dose.
- Wash your linens separately that have any waste material, such as urine, stool or vomit.

What other information do I receive?

Before you start taking an oral therapy, you'll be given:

- A list of side effects for the medicine you're taking.
- Instructions from your care team and written instructions on what to do for side effects at home.
- Instructions on how and when you can care for your side effects or when you need to call the clinic.
- Our phone number so you or your loved one can call us anytime.
- A diary to record side effects and treatments.

My chemotherapy plan

Usually, knowing the exact timeline for your treatment is difficult. Creating a treatment plan helps you:

- Clarify information you need.
- Identify your personal needs.
- Decide what will be most meaningful for your desired quality of life.
- Address fears and concerns.

What can I do?

Figuring out the physical, emotional and spiritual support you want helps guide your treatment plan. Use Pages 39 and 40 of *Your Care Guide for Living with Cancer* to write notes while talking with your care team about the best treatment plan for you. Some questions you may want to ask include:

- What's the goal of my chemotherapy?
- What chemotherapy medicine will I receive?
- What are the benefits of this chemotherapy?
- What are the risks and side effects of this chemotherapy?
- How do I manage the side effects?
- How does chemotherapy affect my other medicines?
- What over-the-counter-medicine or supplements can I take during chemotherapy?
- How's the chemotherapy given?
- What's my cycle length?
- How many cycles will I have?
- How long is each treatment day?
- When does my treatment start?
- What do I eat or drink before a treatment?
- What labs or other tests do I need before I start chemotherapy?
- How do I schedule appointments?
- How do I know my chemotherapy is working?

