

CANCER CHEMOTHERAPY FACT SHEET

Facts:

- Cancer chemotherapy is a term used to describe the treatment of cancer with drugs.
- Chemotherapy can be given by mouth, by injection into a vein or an artery, below the skin, into a muscle, into the fluid surrounding the spinal cord and brain, or into the space surrounding your lungs.
- Cancer cells usually grow more rapidly than normal cells and chemotherapy works by interfering with the growth and reproduction of these cells. Unfortunately, some normal cells also grow rapidly and can be killed by chemotherapy. These normal cells include those found in the bone marrow, mouth, stomach, intestines, hair follicles, and reproductive cells (sperm and egg).
- Some of the side effects from chemotherapy are the direct result of the anti-cancer drugs on these cells. It is important to remember that chemotherapy produces side-effects in some, but not all patients. Each anti-cancer drug can produce different side effects and these may not be the same in all patients. At times certain odors and environments, i.e., coming in to the clinic may trigger nausea. It is important to remember that most side effects can be managed and severe side effects are uncommon.

The following points can help protect you from complications:

1. Notify your physician if you have a fever above 100.5 degrees F.
2. Notify your physician if you have any unusual bruising or bleeding.
3. Notify your physician if you have any unusual dizziness, lightheadedness, shortness of breath, excessive fatigue.
4. Avoid people with obvious illnesses (colds, coughs, flu, etc.).
5. Do not hold or change diapers of children for 6 weeks after the child has received oral polio vaccine (given as drops).
6. Notify your physician of persistent nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or constipation lasting more than 48 hours after treatment.
7. Notify your physician of persistent mouth sores, ulceration, or painful swallowing. Check with your physician before having any dental procedures performed.
8. Remember, if you feel tired, take frequent rest periods before and following chemotherapy appointments.