



Trillium
Health Partners

Better Together

Chemotherapy Education

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1. What is chemotherapy and how can it affect my body?

What is chemotherapy and how will I get it?

What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy is medicines that destroy cancer cells.

- It can also damage good cells in the body which can cause side effects.

Different mixtures of chemotherapy medicines are called protocols or regimens.

- Your Oncologist (cancer doctor) will choose the protocol that is right for you based on the type of cancer you have

How may I get chemotherapy?

You may get chemotherapy in one of 3 ways:

1. By mouth - in a pill



Figure 1 - Pack of pills

2. By needle - under the skin or into the muscle



Figure 2 - Syringe

3. By needle - into a vein in your body. This is called an IV or intravenous.

Figure 3 - IV pole with monitor



Figure 4 - chemotherapy infusion system



How might chemotherapy affect my body?

What side effects may I have?

- Low blood cells
- Blood Clots (DVT/PE)
- Mouth problems
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Skin and Nail issues
- Hair loss
- Energy (Fatigue)
- Sexuality
- Fertility
- Chemo Fog

What do blood cells do?

There are three types of blood cells:

White blood cells fight infection

Red blood cells carry oxygen to your body

Platelets clot the blood which helps to stop bleeding

What can happen to my white blood cells?

- With chemotherapy treatment, you may have lowered white blood cell count
- When your **white blood cell count is low** it is called **neutropenia**
- When your white blood cell count is low, it is easier for you to get sick with an infection

How can I prevent getting an infection?

1. Wash your hands thoroughly

Washing your hands is one of the best ways to keep yourself from getting sick. Always wash all areas of your hands thoroughly. For example, you may use the “Happy Birthday” song as a guide to know that you have scrubbed your hands for long enough.



2. Practice good personal hygiene and keep your skin clean

- ✓ Bathe or shower regularly
- ✓ Keep the area around your bottom clean



Keep your skin healthy and clean. Bathe regularly and keep your perineal (bum/bottom) area clean

3. Avoid people with colds, cough or flu

With chemotherapy treatment, you may have lowered white blood cell count.



When your white blood cell count is low it is called neutropenia

When your white blood cell count is low, it is easier for you to get sick with an infection

4. Practice good mouth care

Mouth care is important for preventing infections. On page 6 of this book, mouth care is explained.



How will I know if I might have an infection?

You may have a fever if you have:

- Fever of 38°C or 100°F
- Chills
- Sweating
- Loose bowel movements
- Burning when you urinate or having to urinate more often
- Cough, sore throat or mouth sores



Why is checking for a fever important?



A fever is a sign that you might have an infection.

This can be dangerous.

Please check your temperature once a day even if you feel well. If you feel ill, check your temperature more often.

What do I do if I have a fever?

If your temperature is 38° to 38.2°C or 100°F **for** 1 hour

OR

If you have a temperature of 38.3°C or 101°F

Do Not take

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
- Ibuprofen (Advil®)
- Acetylsalicylic Acid (Aspirin®)

To learn what to do in case of a fever, look at the handout called, “**Fever and Infection while on Chemotherapy**” in your **blue** folder labeled “Chemotherapy Education”.

How will I know my red blood cells might be low?

- You feel
 - ✓ tired
 - ✓ dizzy
 - ✓ weak
- You look pale
- You are short of breath



Your blood work is checked by the health care team regularly. If they find your red blood cells are too low, you may need a transfusion.

How will I know my platelets might be low?

The number of platelets in your blood may be low if you have:

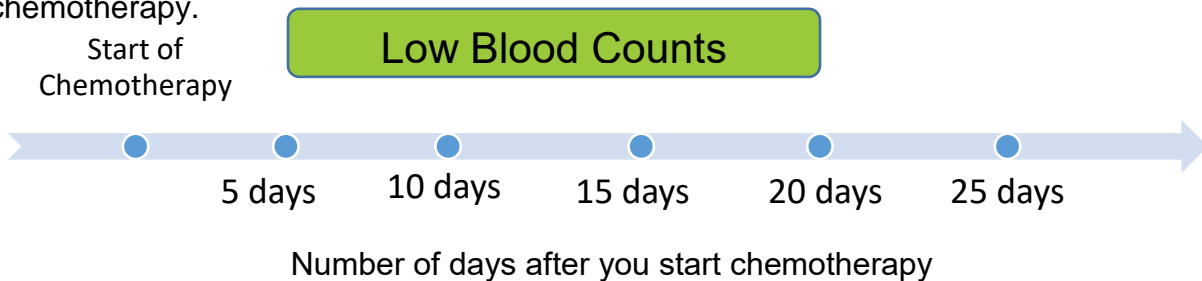
- Nose bleeds
- Bruise easily and more often
- Bleeding gums
- Blood in pee or stool
 - stool may look tarry, black

If you have these symptoms, please speak with your health care team.

If you have bleeding that will not stop, go to your nearest Emergency department.

When can I expect low blood counts?

You may start to have low blood counts between 5-20 days after you start chemotherapy.



Remember: Not everyone will have this side effect.
If you have questions, talk to your primary nurse.

Adapted from Chemotherapy Introduction – Side Effects Overview & Safety [video] (2013), UHN Patient Education & Engagement

What can I do to prevent bleeding?

To help prevent bleeding you should:

- Avoid the following medications: (If you take these medications on a regular basis, speak with your Oncologist).
 - Ibuprofen, Motrin[®], Advil[®]
 - Acetylsalicylic Acid, Aspirin[®]
- Blow your nose gently
- Use electric razors
- Avoid activities that would increase your risk of bleeding. For example: contact sports

Where can I learn more about preventing bleeding?

You can learn more by going to the **Patient Education** section of our website. In that section, you will find:

- A video about **Bleeding and Bruising** by North York General Hospital.

Blood Clots: What is Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) and Pulmonary Embolism (PE)?

Cancer and chemotherapy treatment may cause blood clots. These blood clots may cause 2 types of side effects:

- **Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)**
DVT happens when a blood clot forms in a vein deep inside a part of your body. **This can cause arm or leg pain and swelling.**
- **Pulmonary Embolism (PE)**
PE happens when a blood clot in your veins breaks loose and travels into your lungs.

What should I do if I think I have DVT or PE?

- **DVT or PE is a serious condition.**
- Let your health care team know immediately if you experience limb pain or swelling in the legs or arms

If you have sudden shortness of breath, go to your nearest Emergency department.

How may my mouth be affected?



Side effects related to your mouth may be:

- Dry mouth
- Sore mouth or throat
- Sores on lips (cold sores)
- Mouth sores (cankers)
- White patches in mouth or on the tongue (thrush)

If your protocol causes mouth sores we will give you a prescription for a medicated mouth wash.

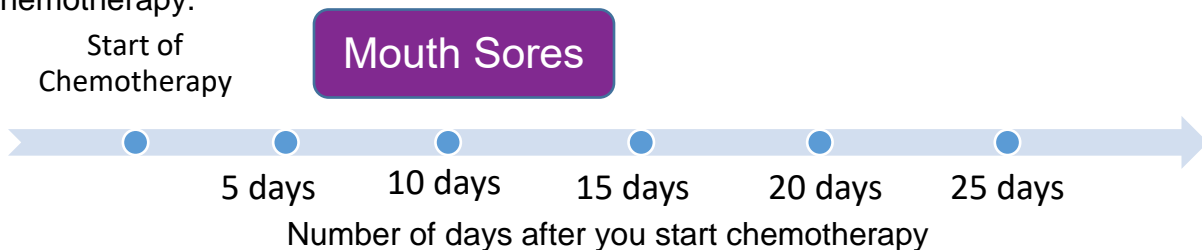
We recommend having a dental exam before starting chemotherapy

If you have any of these symptoms, please discuss with your health care team.

If you are not able to swallow fluids or food for more than 24 hours, get help right away. To find out how to get help, look at the handout called, “**Chemotherapy Side Effects...When Should I Worry?**”

When can I expect any mouth problems?

Mouth problems, such as mouth sores, can start between 5-15 days after you start chemotherapy.



Remember: Not everyone will have this side effect.
If you have questions, talk to your primary nurse.

Adapted from Chemotherapy Introduction – Side Effects Overview & Safety [video] (2013), UHN Patient Education & Engagement

How do I keep my mouth healthy?

Keep your mouth moist and clean:

1. Drink more fluids

2. Rinse your mouth often and after each meal

- ✓ Use only alcohol-free commercial mouthwashes

Or

- ✓ Make your own mouthwash. To make your own mouth wash:

To make a fresh **cup** each time, mix together:

- ¼ teaspoon of baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon of salt
- 1 cup of warm water

To make a **large amount** and use over time, mix together:

- 1 teaspoon of baking soda
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 4 cups of warm water

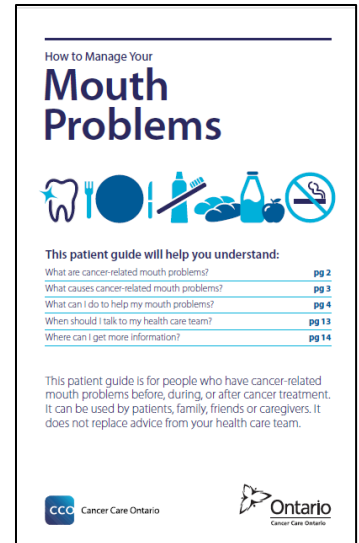
Source: Cancer Care Ontario (2016). How to manage your mouth problems.

4. Use lip balm
5. Take out dentures when you can

Where can I learn more about keeping my mouth healthy?

You can learn more by going to the **Patient Education** section of our website. In that section, you will find:

1. A booklet called, “**How to Manage your Mouth Problems**” by Cancer Care Ontario (Ontario Health).
<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/3156>
2. A video on **Mouth Sores** by North York General Hospital.



<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/3156>

What if I have nausea or vomiting?

If your chemotherapy will cause nausea or vomiting, your Oncologist will prescribe medicine to prevent nausea and vomiting.

A pharmacist will meet with you to explain when and how to take your anti-nausea medicine.

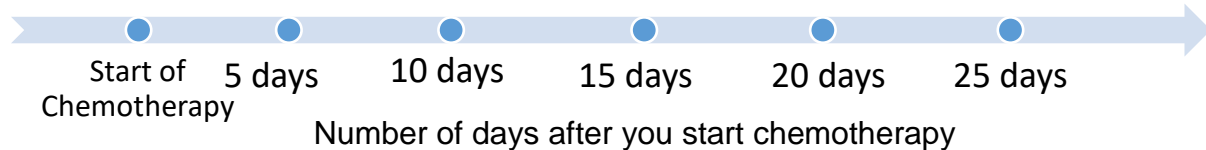
Please follow the instructions the pharmacist gave you when you are taking the anti-nausea medicine(s)

If you vomit 7 or more times in less than 24 hours, get help right away.
To find out how to get help, use the handout called, “**Chemotherapy Side Effects...When Should I Worry?**”

When can I expect nausea and vomiting?

You may **start** to have some nausea before chemotherapy. Nausea can also start up to 4 days after you start chemotherapy, and be strongest within the first 2 days.

Nausea



Remember: Not everyone will have this side effect.
If you have questions, talk to your primary nurse.

Adapted from Chemotherapy Introduction – Side Effects Overview & Safety [video] (2013), UHN Patient Education & Engagement

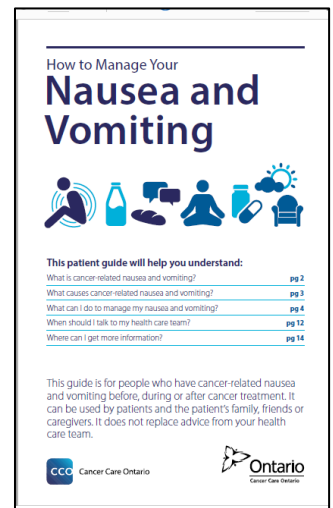
Where can I learn more about managing nausea and vomiting?

You can learn more by going to the **Patient Education** section of our website. In that section, you will find:

1. A booklet called, **“How to Manage your Nausea and Vomiting”** by Cancer Care Ontario (Ontario Health).

<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/3131>

2. A video called **How to Manage Nausea during Chemotherapy** by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre.



<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/3131>

What is diarrhea?

Diarrhea is:

- watery, loose stools
 - OR
 - having a bowel movement more often than your normal
- You may have stomach cramps, bloating or pain too.
 - Diarrhea is different for every person.

Things you can do if you have diarrhea:

- Take anti-diarrhea medication as prescribed
- Replace lost fluids to prevent dehydration
- Contact your primary nurse if your diarrhea is not responding to the anti-diarrhea medications

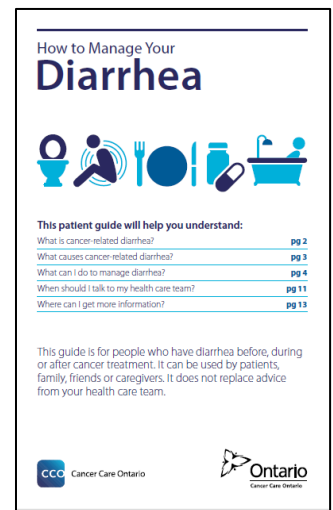
If you have diarrhea 7 or more times than your normal, get help right away. To find out how to get help, use the handout called, “Chemotherapy Side Effects...When Should I Worry?”

Where can I learn more about managing diarrhea?

You can learn more by going to the **Patient Education** section of our website. In that section, you will find:

A booklet called, “**How to Manage your Diarrhea**” by Cancer Care Ontario (Ontario Health).

<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/3151>



<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/3151>

What is constipation?

Constipation is when you have less bowel movements than normal or your stool is hard and difficult to pass.

- Make sure that you:
 - ✓ drink lots of fluids
 - ✓ take your stool softener and laxatives as prescribed
 - ✓ eat lots of fibre and fruits
 - ✓ are physically active

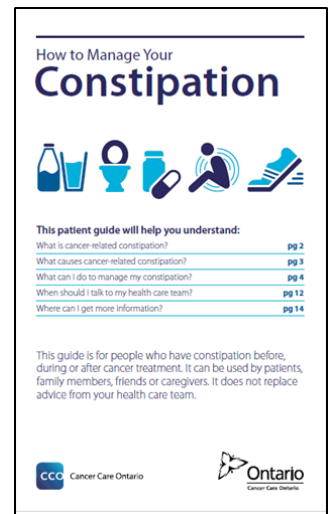
Call your primary nurse if you have taken your medications and you still have not had a bowel movement for 2 to 3 days.

Where can I learn more about managing constipation?

You can learn more by going to the **Patient Education** section of our website. In that section, you will find:

A booklet called, “**How to Manage your Constipation**” by Cancer Care Ontario (Ontario Health).

<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/3146>



<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/3146>

How may my skin and nails be affected?

Chemotherapy may cause changes to your skin and nails. You may have:

- Dryness of skin, eyes or nose
 - For dry eyes, use eye drops like natural tears eye drops
 - For dry nose, use a nasal gel like Secaris®
- Skin rash
- Changes in skin colour
- Current skin problems may become worse or better
- Changes in nails
 - Nails may become cracked, dark or yellow

How do I keep my skin healthy?

To keep your skin healthy:

- Moisturize your skin twice a day
 - Use non-perfumed creams or lotions
- Practice sun safety
 - ✓ Use SPF of 30 or more
 - ✓ Avoid direct sunlight and tanning beds
 - ✓ Wear a hat
 - ✓ Wear clothing that will cover your arms and legs

How may my hair be affected?

Depending on your chemotherapy, you may have:

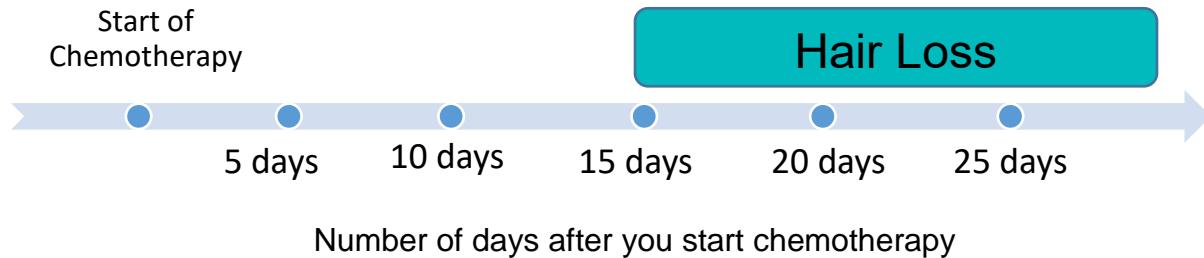
- Hair loss
- Thinning of your hair
- Your scalp may become tender
- Hair loss or thinning changes can be anywhere on the body: eyebrows, eyelashes, arm hair, pubic hair.
- You may want to consider a wig, scarf, hats or a toupee. Be creative!
- **If you lose hair, your hair will grow back once chemotherapy is done.**
- You may be quite surprised with the texture and even colour as your hair grows back. A handout about '[Where to Start – Wigs](#)' can be found on our website at:

Care for your scalp,

- use gentle, non-perfumed hydrating cleansers
- Do not use hair color or perms

If my hair will be affected, when will I start losing hair?

You may **start** to have hair loss 15 days after you start chemotherapy.



Remember: Not everyone will have this side effect.
If you have questions, talk to your primary nurse.

Adapted from Chemotherapy Introduction – Side Effects Overview & Safety [video] (2013), UHN Patient Education & Engagement

How may my energy be affected?

Fatigue is a common side effect of cancer. Having treatments such as radiation and chemotherapy can make fatigue worse. You can do many things to help your fatigue. For example:

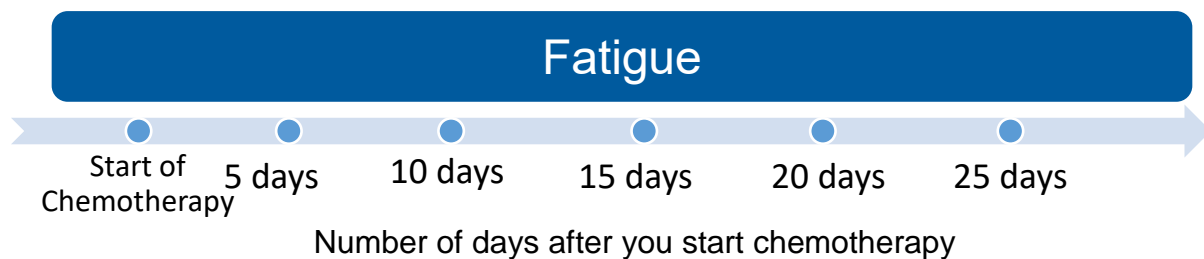
- Be active
- Eat well
- Manage stress and emotions
- Improve your sleep



Speak with your health care team to get help with managing fatigue.

When can I expect fatigue?

You may feel fatigue the whole time you are getting chemotherapy.



Remember: Not everyone will have this side effect.
If you have questions, talk to your primary nurse.

Adapted from Chemotherapy Introduction – Side Effects Overview & Safety [video] (2013), UHN Patient Education & Engagement

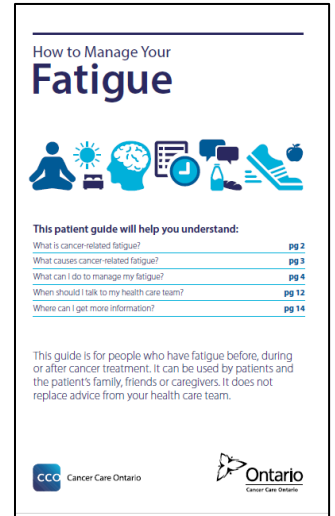
Where can I learn more about managing fatigue?

You can learn more by going to the **Patient Education** section of our website. In that section, you will find:

1. A booklet called, “**How to Manage your Fatigue**” by Cancer Care Ontario (Ontario Health).

<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/3991>

2. A video called **Managing Cancer Related Fatigue** by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre.



<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/3991>

How may my sexuality be affected?

Your body image and sexual function may change during and after cancer treatments. These changes can affect how you feel about yourself, and affect the quality of your life.



Can I still have sex during treatment?

Yes, but emotional and physical changes may make sex uncomfortable or make you less interested in it.

If I have sex, are there any safety tips my partner and I should follow?

- If you have sex, use condoms
- Avoid getting pregnant or getting others pregnant

Speak with your health care team to discuss your concerns.

Where can I learn more about sexual health during cancer treatment?

If you would like to learn more about sexual health, these resources can be found in the patient resource center in the waiting room or online at the below links:

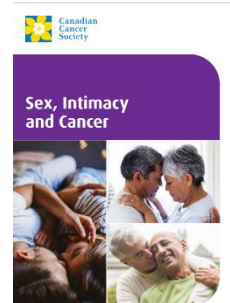
1. Talk to your health care team
2. A guide on **“Intimacy and Sex”** by Cancer Care Ontario (Ontario Health).

<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/35051>



<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management/35051>

3. **“Where to start...Sexuality”** handout or pdf found on our website at
4. **Sexuality and Cancer: A Guide for People with Cancer** (book) Canadian Cancer Society
<https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/resources/publications?page=2>



Will my fertility be affected?

Chemotherapy may affect your ability to have children (fertility). If this is the case for you, your Oncologist will talk to you about this.

You may want to talk to someone about the way fertility changes are making you feel. You can talk to an Oncology Social Worker about this.

To contact your Oncology Social Worker you can find their contact here:

<https://www.thp.ca/patientservices/CancerServices/Pages/default.aspx#1>

More information about Fertility or Infertility can be found here:

“Where to Start....Fertility and Infertility”

What is chemo fog and how may I be affected?

You may have thinking or memory problems during and after cancer treatment. Many people call this, “chemo fog” or “chemo brain”.

You may have chemo fog if:

- You find it hard to concentrate or learn new skills
- Your mind feels foggy or confused
- It takes you longer than usual to do everyday things

The severity and duration of the symptoms described as chemo fog or chemo brain differ from person to person.

What can I do if I have chemo fog?

If you have chemo fog, you can:

- Speak with your health care team if you have mental changes -- there may be other causes including stress or other medications
- make notes of things you need to do or activities you need to attend
- Follow a set daily routine
- Consider attending a chemo fog workshop online through Wellspring.

What safety steps do I need to take when I am getting chemotherapy?



What safety steps should my family and I follow during chemotherapy?

Body fluids may have chemotherapy in them for up to 48 - 72 hours after your treatment. Follow the safety steps below.

- If you clean up vomit, feces or urine, wear gloves
- After you go to the washroom, flush the toilet 2 times with the lid closed

For more safety information, look at the **Medication Information Sheet(s)** your nurse gave you.

What can I do if I have questions or concerns about chemotherapy and its side effects?

How can I get help with my questions or concerns about side effects?

- Call your **primary nurse** during business hours
- Go to the closest **Emergency department** if you need to be seen right away
- If you are not sure how to get help with side effects, look at the handout called, “**Chemotherapy Side Effects: When should I worry?**”
- For more information about managing side effects, look at:
 1. The **Medication Information Sheet(s)** your nurse gave you
 2. The **Patient Education** section of our website

Who can I call if I can't come to my appointment?

Let us know if you cannot come to your scheduled appointment as soon as you can. To find the phone number to call:



- Look at your **appointment list or letter**, or
- Go to the Trillium Health Partners' Cancer Services webpage at

<http://trilliumhealthpartners.ca/patientservices/cancerservices>

There is a list of contact people and phone numbers at the above website.

When should I call or see my family doctor?

Your family doctor is part of your health care team. See them for concerns not related to your cancer.

2. What do I need to know about my medications during chemotherapy?

How do I pay for medications?



How can I cover the cost of medications?

There are 2 main types of medications you will have during treatment:

1. Chemotherapy
 - OHIP covers the cost of most chemotherapy
2. Take Home Medications
 - If you are covered by the **Ontario Drug Benefit Program**, this program will cover the cost of most of your take home medications
 - If you have **private insurance**, your insurance may cover the cost of your take home medications

For other expensive drugs, a **Medication Access Specialist** or Drug Navigator may be able to help you.

How can the Medication Access Specialist or Drug Navigator help me?

A Medication Access Specialist/Drug Navigator can:

- answer your questions about medication coverage
- work with you and your insurance company for medication coverage for expensive drugs
- help look for other options to help pay for medications, for example: compassionate programs
- give you information about the Provincial Trillium Drug Program, and other government health plans

How can I connect with a Medication Specialist?

To connect with a Medication Access Specialist, use the phone numbers below.

- If your cancer doctor is part of the **Credit Valley Oncology Team**, call: 905-813-1100 ext. 5059
- If your cancer doctor is part of the **Queensway Oncology Team**, call: 905-813-1100 ext. 5988

Where can I get my take home Medications?



You can get your take home medications from any pharmacy. The pharmacy at the hospital (on the 2nd floor) will carry all of the medications for your treatment. Other pharmacies may need to order your medications. This can delay the start of your treatment.

If you go to your local pharmacy, make sure that:

- They will be able to order and/or give you the medication on time
- They will be able to give you the exact amount you need

What medications should I bring with me to my appointment(s)?

On your first day of chemotherapy, bring **all** of your medications with you on the first day of chemotherapy. This includes:

- New and old prescription medications that you are taking or will take
- Over the counter medications that you are using
- Natural health products you are using (e.g., vitamins, minerals)

For every appointment, have an up-to-date medication list with you

What should I know about my medications?

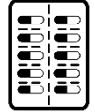
For each medication, write down the following:

- What is the **name of the medication**?
- **Why** do you take it?
- **When** do you take it?
- **How** do you take it?
- **How long** do you take this medication?

What should I include on my medication list?

What is the name of the medication	Why do you take it?	When do you take it?	How do you take it?	How long do you take this medication?
Drug X	Nausea & Vomiting	In the morning before starting my chemo. Or 7:30 am	On an empty stomach with a full glass of water. Avoid grapefruit juice.	For 3 days after starting my treatment.

What is the name of the medication? Most medications have 2 names, the chemical or generic name and the brand or trade name. Both names may be used interchangeably, so you should know both names. An example is Ibuprofen (chemical name) is also called Advil® which is the brand name.



Why are you taking this medication? Some medications can be used for many different reasons, so be sure you know why YOU are taking the medication.

When should you take the medication? Some medications are better taken in the morning and some are better taken before you go to bed. Be sure you know when it is the best time to take the medication.



How do you take the medication? Always ask if there are any special precautions with the medication.

- Do you take the medication with food?
- On an empty stomach?
- Are there any fruit juices to avoid?
- Or is it best to take it just with a glass of water?

How long do you take the medication for? This is especially important while you are taking medication for chemotherapy treatment. There may be many different schedules for taking the medication. Be sure you know exactly how long to take the medication for.

What other information should I keep a record of?

If you have an allergic reaction to a medication, write down the name of the medication and keep it with you. It is for your health care team to:

- Keep your allergy records up to date
- Know whether you are having a side effect to treatment or an allergic reaction.

What if I forget to take my medication?

If you forget to take your medication, follow the instructions your health care team has given you.

Pharmacists can help if you have trouble keeping track of your medications

How can pharmacists help?



Pharmacists can help you by:

- Letting you know if any of the medications you are taking can interact with each other
- Sharing ways to prevent and manage side effects
- If the things you are doing already aren't working, they can suggest other ways to deal with side effects

Summary about your medications

- **Bring all your medications to your first chemotherapy appointment**
- **Remember that Pharmacists are available to answer your questions about medications**
- **Fill your prescription, and take your medications as directed**

Questions

Talk to your primary nurse, Oncologist (cancer doctor), or other members of your healthcare team if you have any questions about this information.

3. How can I eat and live well during chemotherapy?

How can I eat well during chemotherapy?

Why is eating well important?

Eating well helps you:

- ✓ Feel well and keep your body strong
- ✓ Cope better with treatment side effects
- ✓ Heal and recover after treatment
- ✓ Keep your immune system strong
- ✓ Keep your weight stable

Eating well also gives you energy.

How can I eat well?

Follow Canada's Food Guide as best as you can. Visit Canada Food Guide's website for more information at:

<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>

If following the food guide is hard for you, meet with a dietitian to get help.

What if I need more calories and protein?

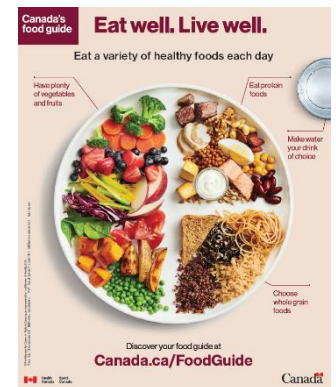
There are many reasons why you may need more calories or protein. If you need more calories or protein in your diet, you can:

- Make your own smoothie or shake at home.
- Use a store-bought supplement like Ensure[®] or Boost[®]

What about drinking fluids?

Drink 8 to 10 cups of fluid a day.

- Choose water or drinks that are low in sugar
- Limit caffeine (for example: 1-2 cups per day)



<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>

Can I drink alcohol?

If you choose to drink alcohol, ask your Oncologist (cancer doctor) first. **If** your Oncologist says it is okay for you to drink, follow the limits below:

Women: No more than 1 drink a day

Men: No more than 2 drinks a day

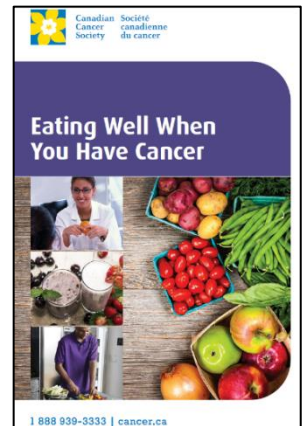
Usual drink sizes include:

- Beer: 360 milliliters (12 fluid ounces) of regular strength beer (5% alcohol)
- Spirits: 45 milliliters (1.5 fluid ounces) of spirits (40% alcohol)
- Wine: 150 milliliters (5 fluid ounces) of wine (12% alcohol)

Where can I get more information about eating well and managing side effects?

To get more information about eating well:

- Look at **Eating Well When You Have Cancer** by the Canadian Cancer Society
<https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/resources/publications/eating-well-when-you-have-cancer>
Call a Dietitian
- Attend Wellspring's Nutrition Sessions online



<https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/resources/publications/eating-well-when-you-have-cancer>

Who can I ask if I have questions about my diet?

If you have questions about your diet, you can:

- Talk to your health care team
- Talk to a Registered Dietitian at the cancer centre to:
 - Get individual counseling
 - Help you manage side effects through diet
 - Understand food myths
- Connect with a Registered Dietitian by calling Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000

What if I take vitamins, minerals and other Natural Health Products?

Should I tell my health care team that I am taking Natural Health Products?

Yes, always tell your health care team if you are taking (or want to take) any natural health products.

Natural health products include:

- Vitamins
- Minerals
- Herbals
- Chinese Medicine, and
- Homeopathic Medicines

Some products are not harmful, but others may have a bad effect on your treatment.

Are any Natural Health Products safe to take during treatment?

The natural health products below may be okay for you to take:

- a single, 1 a day **regular strength** multivitamin
- Vitamin D
- Calcium

Check with your healthcare team **before** taking any of these natural health products.

How can I live well during chemotherapy?

Should I exercise?

Stay as active as you can during treatment. Exercise can help you with fatigue and anxiety.



Talk to your healthcare team before starting **any** exercise program.

Some tips to get started are:

- Start slowly and at lower intensity (example: walking or stretching)
- Start for a shorter time, like 10 minutes
- Take breaks in between



Should I think about quitting smoking?



Quitting smoking helps:

- Cancer treatments (radiation and chemotherapy) work better
- Reduce the chance of your cancer coming back or getting another form of cancer
- Make surgery safer and recover more quickly

What services are available?

- Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000

Summary about eating and living well during cancer

- ✓ **Keep eating well during your chemotherapy**
- ✓ **Tell your health care team of any natural health products you are taking**
- ✓ **Continue to be physically active during your chemotherapy**
- ✓ **Be smoke free**
- ✓ **If you have eating related side effects, ask for help from your health care team**

Questions

Talk to your primary nurse, Oncologist, or other members of your healthcare team if you have any questions about this information.

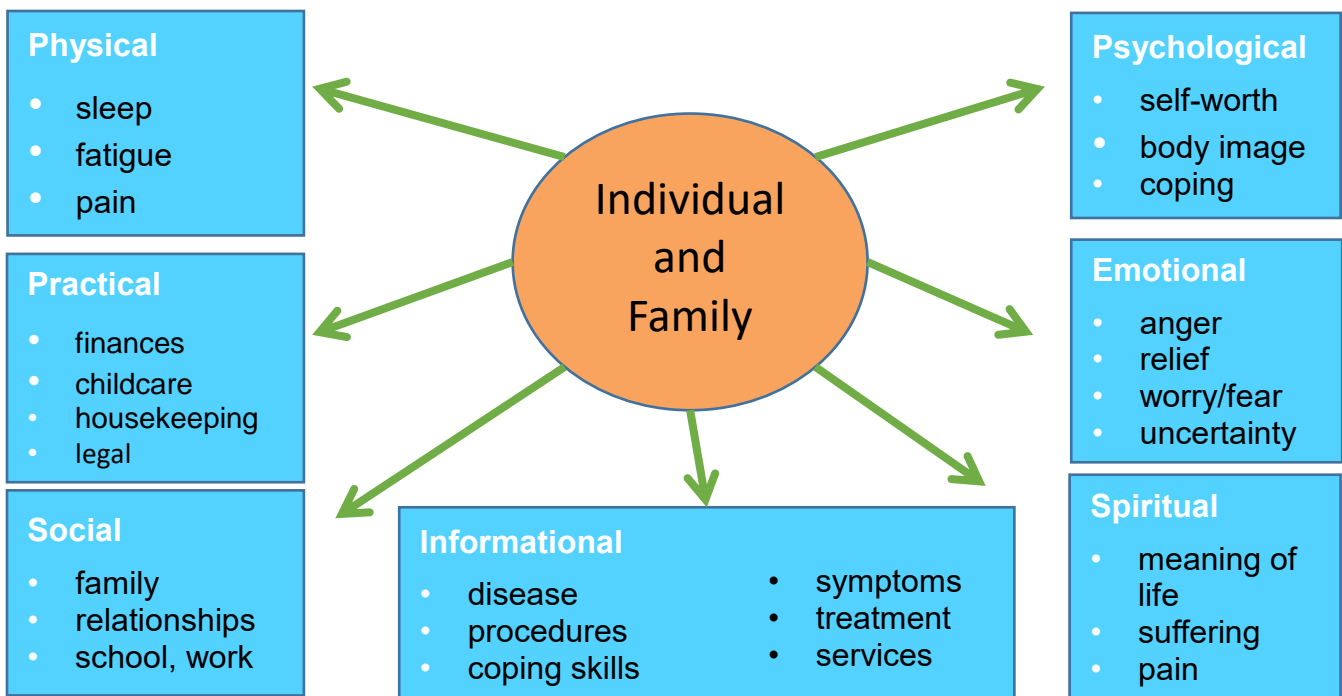
4. How cancer may affect your life and where to get help?

What areas of my life may be affected by cancer?

Cancer is like a pebble that hits the water; it spreads out and affects all areas of our lives. With that in mind, this chapter is designed to give you a bit of an overview of each of the areas in which you may need help. The following chapter will go over each area briefly and have a little bit of information about:

1. Physical
2. Practical
3. Social
4. Informational
5. Psychological
6. Emotional and
7. Spiritual concerns

They are common areas that social work can assist with.



Friends can be like family (not just referring to family).

(Fitch, 2002)

How can I get help with practical concerns?

How will I pay the bills if I can't work?



Ask your health care team for information on the Money Matters Program (handout called “**Where will my money come from?**”) or visit <https://wellspring.ca/online-resources/money-matters/>

- It will provide information on government and employer programs to let you know what financial programs may be available to you.

Talk to your health care team if you have concerns about money and they will help you look into various foundations to help with the costs of cancer.

What about work?

Most people find it hard to work while going through cancer treatments. If you think you may be able to consider working, please speak with your healthcare team to find out what some of the risks and benefits may be before continuing to work while going through treatment. If you are continuing to work because of concerns with finances, please ensure you speak with your healthcare team.

What if I have legal questions?

It is helpful to have a power of attorney (POA) who can let your health care team know what decisions you would make, if you were able to. Similar to getting car insurance, most of us don't get car insurance because we think that we will get into an accident. We get it, “just in case” we are in an accident and then we're usually quite glad that we have it in place.



There are two kinds of Power of Attorney (POA)

1. personal care (health care decisions) and
2. property (finances and property)

Power of Attorney booklets are available at the clinic. The POA booklets are legally binding when completed. You need to take them to your bank when completed.

Discuss with the person you assign as your POA to let them know what your wishes are. **The Speak Up** book (you can find in clinic) talks about what things you may need to think about to help with these conversations.

Where can I get more information?

- The first place to receive information about your cancer and treatment is your health care team.
- Be cautious when searching for information. You may find a lot of information, but not all of it may apply to you
 - Bring questions back to your health care team
- Start by connecting with the **Canadian Cancer Society (CCS)**.

1-888-939-3333 <https://cancer.ca>

CCS publishes many different documents. You can find these on their website and in the cancer centre.

How can I get the most from my medical appointment?

When you come for your first appointment at the Cancer Centre, your healthcare team should give you a **Patient and Caregiver handbook**. You can also get this handbook online at:

Use this handbook, as a tool to understand what's available to you and to take notes. You can bring it with you to your appointments.



Can I bring a support person with me?

We do suggest you bring someone to your doctor's appointments for support and as an extra set of ears. This way you have another person who is listening to what is being said and can help remember the details of the appointment with you. (COVID-19 precautions, may at times, restrict people coming into the hospital. Please check with your healthcare team before coming to your appointments what the current policies are).

Can I come to my appointment with a list of questions?

Come to your appointments with a list of **any** questions you have. If you are not sure what questions to ask your healthcare team, look at the Canadian Cancer Society's book: **Questions to Ask About Cancer**. You can find it at this website or in clinic:

<https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/resources/publications/questions-to-ask>

- ✓ Take notes during your appointments
- ✓ Talk to your healthcare team about how you and your family are coping
- ✓ Use a folder or binder to organize the information you get

What can I discuss with my healthcare team?

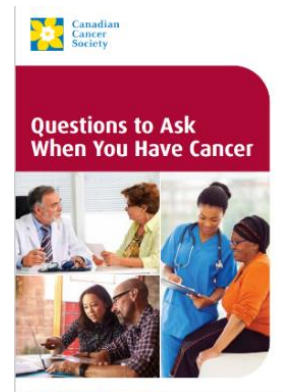
We want to know how you are doing physically with the effects of cancer treatment. But we also want to know how you and your family are coping. Please do talk to us so that we can let you know what help is available.

What may I be feeling or thinking?

What feelings are common during this time? You can expect that you will feel a number of emotions. It is normal to feel whatever you are feeling. The emotions will come and go. Many of your thoughts and emotions are not right or wrong. Some are more helpful than others.

The reality is that this journey will likely be difficult at times and there will be ups and downs.

You don't have to be positive all of the time.



<https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/resources/publications/questions-to-ask>

What do I do if I need help with my emotions and thoughts?

You can ask for help at any time.

Who can I ask for help?

- ✓ Your healthcare team is there for you
- ✓ Online support groups - your healthcare team can tell you about available groups or you can go online and visit: www.cancerchat.ca
- ✓ Wellspring: is a cancer support agency that provides free services to cancer patients and their families <https://wellspring.ca/>

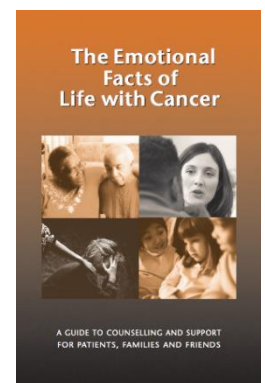
All these services are free.

How do I know if I am having difficulty coping?

You can start by completing the questionnaire in the booklet the “**Emotional Facts of Life with Cancer**” to help see how you are feeling. You can get this at clinic or online at:

<https://capo.ca/The-Emotional-Facts-of-Life-with-Cancer>

There is also a questionnaire in this book for your loved ones too.



<https://capo.ca/The-Emotional-Facts-of-Life-with-Cancer>

What are my strengths and coping skills?

Ask yourself: How have I managed to get through difficult situations in the past?
Use the skills you have used before to help you now

Often when we are overwhelmed by our emotions (which is often the case after a diagnosis of cancer), we forget about the coping skills we have used in the past.

What is available at the Trillium Health Partners (THP) Oncology Program?

We offer:

- ✓ individual counselling
- ✓ family counselling

Counselling is confidential. This means that what you say will not be shared with others without your permission. There are some limits to this when there is a safety concern. Counselling is covered by OHIP.

What other concerns can I get help with?

We have resources to help you:

- Tell your family and friends about your cancer
- Talk to children or teens about cancer
- Talk to someone about your spiritual questions or concerns

Why Talk to Children About Someone Having Cancer?

The children and teens in your life know when something is wrong and they have very active imaginations. If they are not included in the conversation, they may imagine an even worse case scenario than what you are going through. Children tend to cope better when they are included in the conversation.

Try to use simple, age appropriate and honest language.

If you're looking for more information:

Ask your healthcare team for the following handouts for more information about talking to your family and friends:

- “Where to Start...Talking to children and teens about cancer?”
- “Where to Start...Connecting with your loved ones?”

To get more support information, explore online workshops and support groups by community organizations like:

Wellspring <https://wellspring.ca/>

Telephone: 1-888-939-3333

What about me, the person helping? Caregiver, care-partner or a support person

What is does it mean to help someone with cancer?

As a caregiver or care-partner, it is important to take care of yourself so that you can continue to support the person you care about. It may mean you take a walk, have a coffee with a friend or take a bubble bath. Whatever it is that helps you to recharge your batteries, it is important to do it so that you can continue to care.

You may surprise yourself with what you can do!

For more information, you can ask your health care team for the handout:

- “To support you in your role as caregiver” and
- Canadian Cancer Society “When someone you know has cancer”

Contacting the Social Work team

Call this confidential number to request support from a member of the the Social Work and Supportive Care Team

Queensway Health Centre: 416-259-7580 ext. 5839

Credit Valley Hospital: 905-813-1100 ext. 4862

Talk to your primary nurse, Oncologist, or other members of your healthcare team if you have any questions about this information.



The Carlo Fidani Peel Regional Cancer Centre **905-813-4411**
Betty and Buster Lockwood Cancer Detection & Treatment Centre **416-521-4110**

www.thp.ca/patientservices/cancerservices

Important Note:

This resource was created by Trillium Health Partners to give patients, families and caregivers general information about chemotherapy. The information in this resource does not replace medical advice. Every effort has been made to ensure information in this resource is complete, correct and up-to-date, but no guarantee is made to that effect. If you have any questions or concerns about the information in this resource, please talk to your healthcare team.

References:

Graphic icons modified and retrieved from (September 2022): <https://thenounproject.com> (5048416, 3294382, 3921369, 169016, 2337593, 4883523, 1125249, 2337630, 1371574, 2922010, 428288, 86100, 470983, 5179888, 4303090, 112220, 3791632, 1933061)

