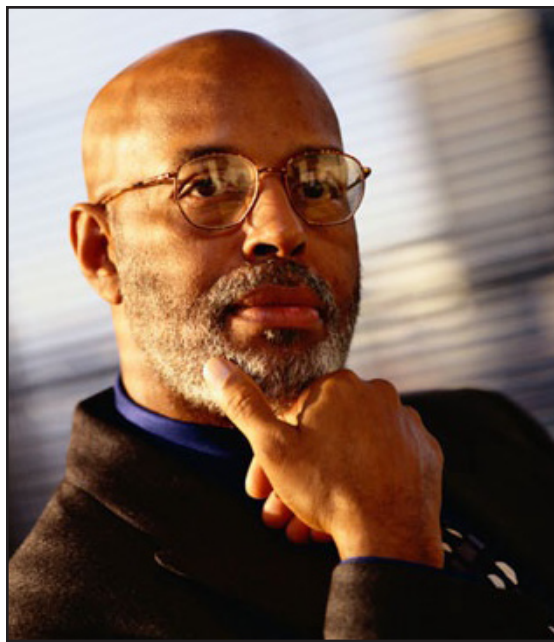


Understanding Chemotherapy



“As soon as I got past the shock of being told I had cancer, I wanted to learn more. I had so many questions about the kind of cancer I have and how it’s treated. Now I’ve finished my first cycle of chemo, and I feel very hopeful.”

Read this pamphlet to learn about chemotherapy.

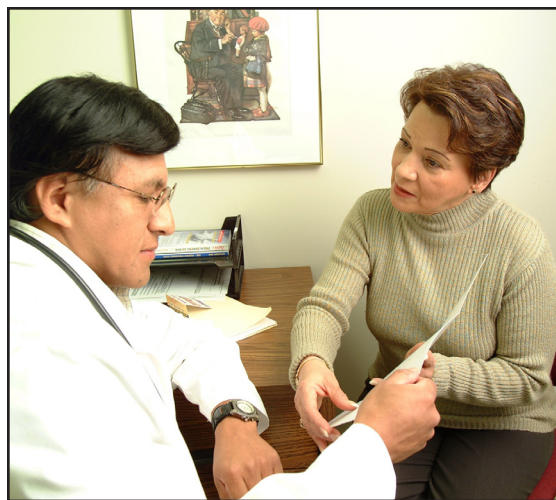
Take it with you to your doctor’s visit to fill in together. This will help you share what you learn with family and friends.

What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy is a cancer treatment that uses drugs to destroy cancer cells. It is also called “chemo.”

Today, there are many different kinds of chemotherapy. So the way you feel during treatment may be very different from someone else.

Have all the blood tests your doctor orders. Blood tests help your doctor take care of your health.



How can chemotherapy help me?

Chemotherapy can be used to:

- Destroy cancer cells
- Stop cancer cells from spreading
- Slow the growth of cancer cells

Chemotherapy can be given alone or with other treatments. It can help other treatments work better. For example, you may get chemotherapy before or after surgery or radiation therapy. Or you may get chemotherapy before a peripheral blood stem cell transplant.



How is chemotherapy given?

Chemotherapy can be given in these forms:

- ☐ An IV (intravenously)
- ☐ A shot (injection) into a muscle or other part of your body
- ☐ A pill or a liquid that you swallow
- ☐ A cream that is rubbed on your skin
- ☐ Other ways: _____

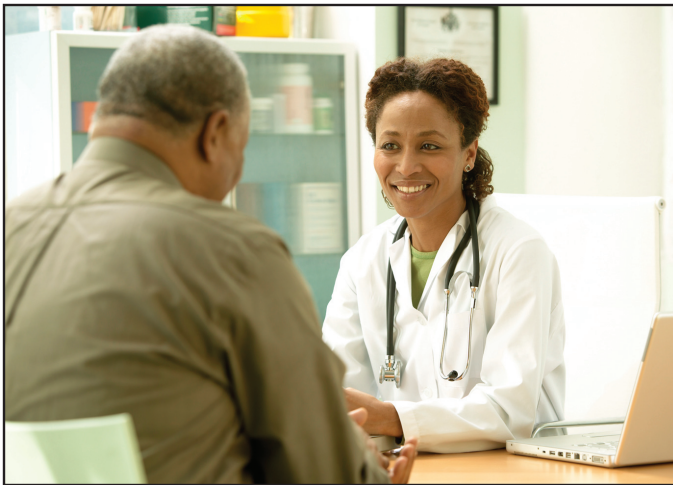
Fill this section in with your doctor or nurse.

This is how I will get chemo:

Fill this section in with your doctor or nurse.

I am getting chemo to:

Check with your doctor or nurse before you take any medicine, vitamins, or herbs. Some of these can change the way chemotherapy works.



When will I get chemotherapy?

You may get treatment every day, every week, or every month. The treatment period is followed by a period of rest when you won't get chemotherapy. This rest period gives your body a chance to build healthy new cells.

Your doctor or nurse will talk with you about your treatment schedule. Ask for a written copy of it, as well.

Fill this section in with your doctor or nurse.

My chemo treatment schedule:

How will I feel during treatment?

Each person and treatment is different, so it is not always possible to tell how you will feel. Some people feel well enough to keep their normal schedules at home or at work. Others feel more tired.

Today many side effects can be prevented or controlled. Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn what side effects you may have and how to manage them.

Fill this section in with your doctor or nurse.

Side effects I might have:

Call the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Cancer Information Service at 1-800-422-6237 to get the free chemotherapy side effects fact sheets.



Can you tell me more about clinical trials?

Cancer treatment clinical trials test new treatments to find better ways to treat cancer. By being in a clinical trial, you can try a new treatment that may, or may not, be better than the treatment already being given. Clinical trials are a treatment option for many people with cancer.

Clinical trials are research studies that involve people.

Learn about clinical trials for the type of cancer you have. Then decide if you would like to be in a clinical trial. Here are some questions you can ask:

- Are there clinical trials that I can take part in?
- Is there information that I can take home to learn more?
- How does the new treatment compare with the other treatment choices?
- What are the possible benefits, risks, or drawbacks of being in a clinical trial?
- How often will I come in for treatment or tests?
- Will I have to pay for the treatment or tests? What costs are covered by my health insurance? What costs are not covered?

Call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-422-6237 or go online to www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials to learn more about clinical trials. You can talk to someone in English or Spanish.

Fill this section in with your doctor or nurse.

Who can I talk with to learn more?

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

If you have more questions:

It's normal to have a lot of questions. Write some down here to help you remember them when you talk with your doctor or nurse.

Write your questions here:

FREE SERVICES TO LEARN MORE

National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)
TTY: 1-800-332-8615
Online: www.cancer.gov
Chat Online: www.cancer.gov/help



NIH Publication No. 08-6449
Printed August 2008

