

Emotional Issues

Chemotherapy brings major changes to a person's life. There is stress in dealing with your diagnosis, deciding on a treatment plan and dealing with that treatment process.

The side effects can also be very challenging. Chemotherapy agents themselves can also affect your mood.

Many people undergoing chemotherapy can be anxious, fearful, angry or depressed at any point during their treatment.



You may lose interest in being intimate with your partner. Remember, these emotions are normal and understandable.

Look for support and share your feelings with your family and friends. You can also talk with caregivers and social workers or find a patient support group. If you have questions or concerns, talk with your doctor or members of your healthcare team.

Always Keep in Mind



It is very important for you to be your own best health advocate.

Follow all your home care instructions

carefully. Learn how to identify and manage effectively the side effects you may experience during your chemotherapy. Report any unusual symptoms to your doctor or member of your healthcare team.

About the Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital Cancer Treatment Center



Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital's Cancer Treatment Center moved into its new, state-of-the-art facility in May 2004. Since opening, the Center has treated approximately 25 new patients each month.

The Center is part of Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital that is in the final stages of a \$55 million expansion and renovation, which includes a new parking garage and five story patient tower.

Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital, a 259-bed facility, opened in May, 1976. In addition to the Cancer Treatment Center, outpatient surgery, sleep disorders and outpatient radiology centers are also featured on campus.

Another Healthcare Service from:


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Managing Chemotherapy Side Effects




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Managing Chemotherapy Side Effects

Chemotherapy is another form of treatment that is given to kill cancer cells, but can also hurt normal, healthy cells. This treatment can result in side effects that you, your doctor and healthcare team will need to discuss and manage. This brochure discusses some common side effects of chemotherapy and how to treat them.

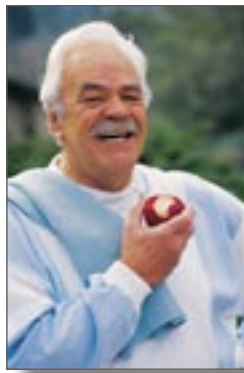
Nausea and Vomiting

These side effects may be managed or at least lessened with anti-nausea medications. Your doctor may prescribe such a medication to be taken before, during or after your chemotherapy treatment.

There are other helpful ideas that can help keep these side effects under control. Eat frequent and small meals. Eat and drink slowly. Avoid fried and fatty foods. Drink cool and clear fruit juices and suck on hard candy or ice cubes. In addition, you may find relaxation techniques helpful in reducing anxiety that can result in nausea.

Anemia

Chemotherapy can reduce the bone marrow's ability to create red blood cells. The resulting condition is anemia. A low red blood cell count can make you feel dizzy, have chills or shortness of breath. It is important to report any of these symptoms to your doctor. Your doctor will check your blood cell count often during your treatment. If it falls too low you may need a blood transfusion to replace the red blood cells. You may also be prescribed medication to help your bone marrow replenish the cells.



There are some things you can do to manage the fatigue that is associated with anemia. Take several short rest periods during the day. Learn to pace your activities. Eat a well-balanced diet and get up slowly from a sitting or lying position to prevent dizziness.

Hair Loss (Alopecia)

Hair loss is another common side effect of chemotherapy. Your doctor or healthcare team member can tell you whether your particular treatment is likely to result in hair loss.

If it does occur, the hair may become thinner or fall out entirely. Losing hair can happen on all parts of the body. It may happen gradually or come out in clumps. Your hair should grow back after your treatment cycle is completed.

During your treatment, you should use mild shampoos, soft brushes and low heat when drying your hair to care for your hair and scalp.

Do not use brush rollers to set your hair and do not dye your hair or get a permanent.

Make certain to use sunscreen lotion, wig, hat or scarf to protect your scalp and neck when you are in the sun.

If you choose to use a wig, some insurance companies may cover the cost when prescribed by your doctor. Check with your insurance provider to determine if your plan has this benefit.

Infections

Chemotherapy can make you more likely to get infections. This happens because most anti-cancer medications reduce the bone marrow's ability to produce white blood cells that are needed to fight infection.

Signs of infection include fever, shaking chills, a sore that is red, swollen or not healing, new cough or shortness of breath, sore throat and a burning feeling when you urinate.

You should report any of these symptoms to your doctor before taking any medications. Try to prevent infections by washing your hands often, staying away from people with colds and flu, avoiding crowds and using an electric shaver instead of a razor.

If you do have a very low white blood cell count (called neutropenia), your doctor may alter your schedule to allow your body to recover so you will be stronger for your remaining treatments.

Oral Care

Good oral care is very important during cancer treatment. Chemotherapy can cause sores in the mouth and throat, making these tissues dry, irritated and/or bleed.

To avoid irritating the mouth, brush your teeth and gums after every meal using a soft toothbrush. Do not use commercial mouthwashes that contain peroxide or alcohol.

Choose soft, soothing foods like ice cream, bananas, mashed potatoes, custards, puddings and other such foods. Avoid irritating acidic foods like citrus, tomatoes, spicy or salty foods and rough, coarse or dry goods.

