

Do you want to know?

Chemotherapy

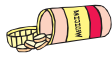
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What is it?

Special medication given for the purpose of killing cancer cells. It may harm some normal cells such as those in the mouth, stomach lining, and hair follicles. However, normal cells recover better than cancer cells, so most cancer cells die while most normal cells survive.

What do you need to know?

Drugs



- Take medications to relieve nausea as prescribed by your physician. These medications help lessen the symptoms.
- Take pain killers before eating if you have mouth ulcers.
- Take a multivitamin supplement with minerals and/or iron as prescribed by your physician.

Diet



Eat a high-protein and a high calorie diet.

Activity



Alternate periods of rest and activity are needed to preserve energy, and at the same time to prevent complications of bed rest.

Therapeutic/preventive Measures Related to the Side Effects

Nausea and Vomiting

- Eat crackers and suck sour candy balls throughout the day.
- Choose cold or room temperature food instead of hot ones since they cause nausea.

- Avoid fatty and sweet food with strong odors since they may increase nausea.
- Stay away from nauseating odors, sights and sounds as much as possible.
- If vomiting occurs, do not eat or drink anything until your stomach rests.
- Avoid serving favorite foods during these episodes in order not to develop a negative response to them.

Decreased Appetite

- Avoid drinking liquids before eating, because they can fill you up.
- Eat with the family or another person if possible.
- Eat a variety of foods. Add sauces and butter to your food to provide taste pleasing meals.
- Ask your dietitian for dietary supplements once you are not getting enough calories. Loss of appetite can be a serious problem that can lead to malnutrition and weight loss.

Mouth Sores

- Inspect your mouth daily for ulcers since it is one of the side effects of several drugs (7-12 days after starting chemotherapy). Oral ulcers make eating uncomfortable.
- Use a soft toothbrush and rinse with baking soda. This will prevent mouth ulcers, loosen crusted drainage and relieve the burning feeling in the mouth.
- Avoid spicy, acidic or rough food to decrease irritation to the mouth.
- Provide a soft and moist diet. It is more comfortable to eat.
- Report to the physician any sign of infection such as soft white patches, dry, brownish, yellow areas, or any open area on the lips and mouth.

Infection

- Eat nutritious meals, drink plenty of fluids, get enough rest and avoid stress as much as possible.

The content of this educational leaflet is of general information. Ask your physician or health care provider if this content applies to you.

Prepared by the Nursing Services in coordination with other health care disciplines.

