

Symptom Management

Symptoms and side effects are physical changes or reaction to a drug or therapy. Your cancer may also be a cause of these symptoms. You will probably not experience all of the symptoms and side effects of cancer treatment. These are some of the most common seen side effects.

Anemia

If you are having trouble concentrating or feeling dizzy or out of breath you may be anemic. Anemia causes fatigue because red blood cells carry oxygen to the body's organs. Diagnosing anemia is simple. It is done with a blood test call called a CBC (complete blood count). If your anemia is severe you may require a blood transfusion, which is done at the hospital.

Nausea/Vomiting

This side effect can occur up to five days after treatment. You will be given prescriptions to have at home in case of nausea. Follow the instructions for taking these anti-nausea medications. Frequent vomiting can become a very serious problem if untreated.

- Many of the anti-nausea medications can lead to constipation
- Drink plenty of fluids. Gingerale and Gatorade are good choices.
- When nauseated try bland foods, toast and crackers
- If you notice a pattern of nausea, take anti-nausea medicine to prevent the nausea.
- Popsicles or frozen juice chips as well as ice chips may be a good choice.

Fatigue

Most patients say this is the side effect of cancer treatment that impacts them the most. Fatigue is a constant overwhelming feeling of exhaustion that is not relieved by rest. You may feel "out of it" and unable to focus and concentrate. Radiation, chemotherapy and surgery and some side effects can all contribute to fatigue. Fatigue can also be a sign of anemia.

Some things that might help include:

- Keep track of your fatigue in a journal. If a pattern develops you can learn to schedule activities during the times when your energy level is better.
- Set priorities! Do things most enjoyable during times when you have good energy.
- Schedule rest and be realistic.
- Be willing to ask for help. Friends and family are always looking for ways to support you, don't try to do everything by yourself.
- Exercise! Ten to 15 minutes a day can help increase your energy levels.
- Join a support group-sharing your feelings with others can often ease the burden of fatigue.



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Pain

- Take your pain medicine as directed by your medical team.
- Call your doctor with any new pain or pain not controlled by your current medication.
- Be aware that many pain medications can cause constipation. Drink plenty of fluids and discuss a bowel regime with your physician or nurse.

Diarrhea

****Dietary handout for management*****

- Avoid foods that cause or aggravate diarrhea
- Record the number of stools you are having a day
- If you are having more than three (3) watery stools per day you should notify your physician as soon as possible. Report to you physician immediately any fever 100.5 (orally) or greater, or any dizziness or lightheadedness when standing
- Try small frequent meals
- Drink 8-10 glasses of clear liquid a day. Gatorade and Gingerale are good choices.

Constipation

****Dietary handout for management*****

Constipation is defined as having a bowel movement fewer than three times a week.

- In the management of cancer, many of the medications can cause constipation, including the chemotherapy.
- There are many over the counter medication that you can take in addition to some changes in your diet that can help. You will be instructed by your nurse on what medications to take and how to take them to manage constipation.
- If you have constipation with intense abdominal cramping you should notify your physician.

When to call the doctor

- Fever 100.5 or greater
- Severe shaking or chills (not relieved by wrapping up in a blanket)
- Pain medication is not working
- Chest pains or Shortness of breath
- Painful breathing
- Abdominal pain
- Bleeding from the nose or gums
- Confusion or any sudden change in mental status



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- Uncontrollable or frequent nausea
- Frequent urination and/or burning on urination
- Blood in urine or stool
- Changes in vision or hearing
- Increased bruising or pinpoint red or purple spots anywhere on the body
- Cough, sore throat or flu-like symptoms



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