

Anemia



“I told my doctor that I was very tired. My doctor did blood tests to check for anemia. Now I am getting treatment for the anemia, and I have a lot more energy.”

Call your doctor or nurse if you feel:

- Dizzy or faint
- Short of breath
- Very weak and tired
- Your heart beating very fast

What is anemia?

Anemia is when your body doesn't have enough red blood cells. Some types of chemotherapy cause anemia. Having anemia can make you feel very tired or weak.

Try these tips when you feel tired or weak:

Save your energy.

- Choose the most important things to do each day.

Ask for help.

- When family or friends offer to help, let them. They can take you to the doctor, buy groceries, or make meals.

Balance rest with activity.

- Take short naps during the day. Short naps of less than 1 hour are best. Too much bed rest can make you feel weak.
- Sleep at least 8 hours every night.
- You may feel better if you take short walks or exercise a little every day.



Eat and drink well.

- Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn what foods and drinks are best for you.
 - You may need to eat high-protein foods. Meat, peanut butter, and eggs are good choices.
 - You may need to eat foods with iron. Red meat, leafy greens (such as collard greens and spinach), and cooked dried beans are good choices.
- Most people need to drink at least 8 cups of liquid every day. Water and juice with extra water added are good choices.



Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What is causing the anemia?
3. Would taking medicine, iron pills, or getting a blood transfusion help me?
4. Could you give me the name of a nutritionist, so I can learn more about what foods might help?

Your doctor or nurse will order blood tests. If you have anemia, you may need medicine. Or you may need a blood transfusion to help you feel better.



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Revised February 2012

How can we help?

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)

Web: www.cancer.gov

Online Chat: www.cancer.gov/livehelp

NCI has a series of 18 Chemotherapy Side Effects Sheets at:

www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects



Appetite Changes



“Many days I’m just not hungry. I find it easier to eat 5 small meals, instead of 3 big meals each day. My nurse told me about foods that can help me keep up my strength.”

What are appetite changes?

Two common changes you may notice are feeling less hungry and finding that some foods may taste different.

- **Eat well to help your body stay strong.**
- **Let your doctor or nurse know if you lose weight.**

Try these tips to make eating easier:

Set meal times and routines.

Eat a little, even if you’re not hungry.

- It may help to eat 5 or 6 small meals each day, instead of 3 large meals.
- Try new foods to keep up your interest in food.
- Eat with family or friends, or watch television while you eat.
- Choose foods that are high in calories or protein like those listed on the back of this sheet.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about seasonings that may help some foods taste better.
- If food tastes like metal, eat with plastic forks or spoons.

Be active.

Being active may help you feel more hungry.

- Take a short walk each day.
- Talk with your doctor or nurse about exercises that can help you.

Drink liquids.

Getting enough to drink is important, but don’t fill up on liquids during meals.

- Drink milkshakes or soups that are easy to swallow.
- Keep track of how much you eat and drink each day. Then talk with your doctor or nurse to make sure you are eating and drinking enough.

Keep this list on your refrigerator.

Eat more of these foods and drinks that are high in calories or protein.

Soups	Drinks	Main meals and snacks	Sweets	Extras
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cream soups • Soups with lentils or beans (such as black, kidney, pinto, or red) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some instant breakfast drinks • Milkshakes • Fruit smoothies • Whole milk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken • Lentils or beans (such as black, kidney, pinto, or red) • Eggs • Fish • Nuts, seeds, and wheat germ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Custard • Ice cream • Muffins • Pudding • Yogurt (plain or vanilla) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butter, margarine, or oil added to foods • Cottage cheese, cream cheese, and sour cream • Some liquid meal replacements • Peanut butter • Powdered milk added to foods

Ask your doctor or nurse what foods and drinks are best for you.



Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What foods should I eat?
3. Are there high-protein drinks or vitamins that can help me?
4. How much water, or other liquids, should I drink each day?
5. What exercises can help increase my appetite?



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Bleeding Problems



“My nurse said that chemotherapy could make it easier for me to bruise and bleed. He told me what to call him about, such as red, pinpoint spots.”

Talk with your doctor or nurse before you take any medicine, vitamins, or herbs.



Take these steps:

Protect yourself.

- Use an electric shaver, not a razor.
- Be careful when using scissors, knives, or other sharp objects.
- Wear shoes all the time, to protect your feet.
- Blow your nose gently.
- Brush your teeth with a very soft toothbrush.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you have hard bowel movements or feel constipated.

Don't do things that could make it easier to bleed.

- **Don't** use dental floss or toothpicks.
- **Don't** pick at pimples or scabs.
- **Don't** play rough sports.
- **Don't** put anything in your rectum, not even a thermometer or medicine.
- **Don't** use tampons. Use pads.

If you start to bleed:

Press down firmly on the area with a clean cloth. Keep pressing until the bleeding stops.

If you bruise:

Put ice on the area for about 20 minutes.

Call your doctor or nurse if you have any of these changes:

Skin changes

- Bruises
- Tiny, red, pinpoint spots on your skin

Head or vision changes

- Bad headaches
- Changes in how well you see
- Feeling confused or very sleepy

Bleeding

- Bleeding that doesn't stop after a few minutes
- Bleeding from your mouth or nose
- Bleeding from your vagina when you are not having your period (menstruation)
- Bleeding during your period that is heavier or lasts longer than normal

Changes when you go to the bathroom

- Blood in your urine. The urine will have a red or pink color to it.
- Black or bloody stools

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. How long should I wait for the bleeding to stop before I call you or go to the emergency room?
3. Is it okay to drink beer, wine, or other drinks with alcohol?
 Yes
 No, don't have any drinks with alcohol.
Other comments: _____

4. Is it okay to have sex?

- Yes
 No

Other comments: _____

5. Can I take medicine, vitamins, herbs, or supplements?

- Yes, it is okay to take: _____
- No, always call to check before you take anything.
- No, you should not take: _____

6. What should I do if I bruise?

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Reprinted April 2010



Constipation



“I had a difficult time going to the bathroom. Eating prunes and other high-fiber foods, such as fruits and vegetables, helped me. I also drank lots of water.”

What is constipation?

Are you having bowel movements that come less often than normal for you, are painful, or are hard to pass? This is called constipation.

Let your doctor or nurse know if you have not had a bowel movement in 2 days.

Take these steps:

Eat high-fiber foods such as:

- Whole-grain breads and cereals
- Fruits and vegetables
- Nuts and seeds

Turn this sheet over to learn what other foods may help.

Drink lots of liquids.

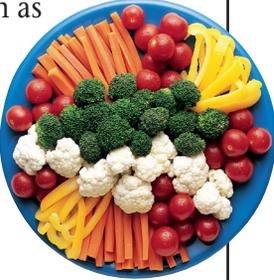
- Most people need to drink at least 8 cups of liquid every day. Water is a good choice. So are fruit and vegetable juices, such as prune juice.
- Warm liquids such as coffee or tea may help.

Try to be active every day.

- Walk or ride an exercise bike for 15 to 30 minutes a day.
- Talk with your doctor to learn about other exercises that can help you.



These foods may help if you are constipated:

Breads and grains	Fruits and vegetables	Snacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bran muffins • Bran or whole-grain cereals • Brown or wild rice • Cooked, dried peas and beans (such as pinto, black, red, or kidney) • Whole-wheat bread • Whole-wheat pasta and tortillas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dried fruit, such as apricots, dates, prunes, and raisins • Fresh fruit, such as apples, blueberries, and grapes • Raw or cooked vegetables, such as broccoli, corn, green beans, peas, and spinach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granola • Nuts • Popcorn • Seeds, such as sunflower 
<p>Ask your doctor or nurse which foods are best for you.</p>		

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. Should I keep track of when I have a bowel movement, what I eat, and how often I exercise?
3. How much liquid should I drink each day?
4. What medicines are okay for me to take?
5. What exercises can help me?
6. Could you give me the name of a nutritionist, so I can learn more about foods that might help me?



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Diarrhea



“I was afraid to go places without a bathroom close by. My nurse told me what foods to eat to feel better. She also told me about medicine that I now take when I need to.”

What is diarrhea?

Do you have bowel movements more often than normal? Are they soft, loose or watery? Then you may have diarrhea.

Call your doctor or nurse if:

- You feel dizzy
- You have a fever of 100.5° F (38° C) or higher
- You have diarrhea and cramps for more than a day
- Your rectal area is sore or bleeds

Do these things to feel better:

Eat small meals that are easy to digest.

- Eat 5 or 6 small meals each day, instead of 3 big meals.

Choose foods from the list on the other side of this sheet.

Drink more liquids each day.

- Keep in mind that drinking more won't stop the diarrhea, but it will help replace fluids you are losing.
- Most people who have diarrhea need to drink 8 to 12 cups of liquid every day.
- Clear broth, gelatin, and Pedialyte® are good choices for most people.

Stay away from these foods:

Some foods can make diarrhea worse.

- **Don't** have dairy products, such as milk, cheese, and sour cream. You may want to try “lactose-free” products instead.
- **Don't** eat spicy, greasy, or fried foods.
- **Don't** have foods that cause gas, such as broccoli and cabbage.
- **Don't** eat foods that are high in fiber, such as whole-wheat breads, granola, and bran cereals.
- **Don't** eat raw fruits or vegetables. Most canned fruits and vegetables are okay.

Check with your doctor or nurse before taking medicine for diarrhea.

These foods and drinks may help if you have diarrhea:

Soups (clear liquids)	Drinks (clear liquids)	Meals and snacks	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear broth, such as chicken, vegetable, or beef 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear soda, such as ginger ale • Cranberry or grape juice • Oral rehydration drinks, such as Pedialyte® • Tea (without caffeine) • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applesauce • Bananas • Crackers • Cream of wheat or rice cereal • Eggs • Gelatin (Jell-O®) • Meats, such as chicken, fish, or turkey—broiled or baked, without the skin • Noodles • Oatmeal • Peanut butter that is creamy or smooth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potatoes—boiled, without the skin • White rice • White toast <p>Most canned or cooked fruits and vegetables without seeds or skins are easy on your stomach.</p> 

Bananas, Rice (white), Applesauce, and Toast (white) are good foods to eat if your diarrhea is severe. This is called the BRAT diet.

Stay away from these drinks:

Some drinks can make diarrhea worse.

- **Don't** have beer, wine, and other drinks with alcohol in them.
- **Don't** have caffeine drinks like cola, coffee, and black tea.

Clean your rectal area with warm water and a baby-wipe. Keep the area dry. Ask about creams that can help.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What medicine is okay for me to take?
3. How much liquid should I drink each day? What are oral rehydration drinks?
4. Would you give me the name of a nutritionist, so I can learn more about what foods to eat and what foods to avoid?
5. What is a sitz bath? How could these help me?



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Fatigue

(Feeling weak and very tired)



“I was so tired. It was hard to do even simple things. My nurse said to stay as active as I could. I found that taking short walks each morning gave me more energy during the day.”

Tell your doctor or nurse if:

- You are not able to do your normal activities
- You are still very tired, even after resting or sleeping

Why do I feel so tired?

Chemotherapy can make you tired. So can other things like anemia, which is a low red blood cell count. Being depressed or in pain, taking certain medicines, or having trouble sleeping can also make you feel tired.

Make a plan to feel less tired.

Do less. Let others help you.

- Do activities that are most important first.
- Ask others for help.
- Take time off from your job, or work fewer hours.



Many people find it helpful to keep track of their energy level. Some people write down how they are feeling each day in a notebook to share with their doctor. Others use their smart phone or a computer. Tracking can help you and your doctor figure out how to manage or treat your fatigue.



Eat and drink well.

- Make healthy foods when you feel well. Freeze them to eat later.
- Eating helps you keep up your strength. Some people find it easier to eat 5 or 6 small meals or healthy snacks instead of 3 big meals.
- Most people need to drink at least 8 cups of water a day. Keep water with you and take small sips during the day.

Be as active as you can.

- Try to exercise every day. Even 15 to 30 minutes a day can help give you energy.
- Take a walk or ride an exercise bike.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about other exercises that can help. Stretching, yoga, or Tai Chi help some people.

Take time to rest.

- Listen to your body. Rest when you feel tired.
- Try to take short naps that are 1 hour or less, during the day.
- Make a bedtime routine. Bathing or listening to music before you go to sleep may help you relax.
- Sleep at least 8 hours every night.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What medicine or treatments can help me?
3. What foods and drinks are best for me?
4. How much liquid should I drink each day?
5. What exercises can help me feel better?
6. How should I track my energy level? What should I write down and share with you?



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Hair Loss

(Alopecia)



“Losing my hair was hard at first. Then I got used to it, and it wasn’t so bad. Sometimes I wore a scarf and other times I left my head uncovered.”

It may help to join a support group to talk with others whose hair has fallen out during cancer treatment.

Questions other people have asked:

Why does hair fall out?

Chemotherapy can harm the cells that make hair. This means that hair on your head and anywhere on your body may fall out. Hair loss is called alopecia.

When will my hair start to fall out?

Your hair may start to fall out 2 to 3 weeks after chemotherapy begins.

What can I do before my hair falls out?



“Treat your hair gently.”

Wash it with a mild shampoo. Pat it dry with a soft towel.



“Cut your hair short.”

Some people choose to cut their hair short.



“Shave your head.”

If you shave your head, use an electric shaver so you won’t cut your scalp.



“Get a wig.”

If you plan to buy a wig or hairpiece, get one while you still have hair. This way you can match it to the color of your hair.

What should I do after my hair falls out?

- Protect your head from the sun. Use sunscreen or wear a hat when you are outside.
- Protect your head from the cold. Wear a hat or scarf.
- Try wearing a soft scarf when you sleep.

When will my hair grow back?

Most likely your hair will grow back in 2 to 3 months after chemotherapy. Sometimes your new hair can be curlier or straighter—or even a different color. In time it may go back to how it was before treatment.

Will insurance pay for a wig?

Yes, wigs are often paid for by health insurance. If not, it may help to get a prescription from your doctor for a “hair prosthesis.” You can also ask your social worker for help.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. Will my hair fall out?
2. How should I protect and care for my head?
3. Where can I get a wig or hairpiece? How can I get my health insurance to pay for it?
4. Are there support groups that can help me cope with hair loss?
5. When will my hair grow back?



Resources that can help you:

American Cancer Society

1-800-227-2345
(1-800-ACS-2345)
www.cancer.org

Look Good...Feel Better

1-800-395-5665
(1-800-395-LOOK)
www.lookgoodfeelbetter.org



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Infection



“I am extra careful to stay away from germs that could make me sick. I wash my hands well, with soap and water, before meals.”

- **Check with your doctor or nurse before you take any medicine. This includes aspirin, acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®), or ibuprofen (such as Advil®).**
- **Check with your doctor or nurse before you get any shot or vaccine.**

Call right away if you have:

- Fever that is 100.5° F (38° C) or higher. Ask how many times a day you should take your temperature.
- Chills
- Cough or sore throat
- Ear pain
- Headache or bad sinus pain
- Stiff or sore neck
- Skin rash
- Sores or white coating in your mouth or on your tongue
- Swelling or redness anywhere. Watch for swelling or soreness if you have a catheter.
- Bloody or cloudy urine
- Pain or burning when you urinate
- Other:

(Ask your nurse about other signs of infection to call about.)

Do you have any other changes or signs that don't seem normal to you? Don't wait. Call your doctor or nurse right away.



Take these steps to lower your chances of getting an infection:

Wash your hands well.

- Always wash your hands:
 - Before you cook or eat
 - After you use the bathroom
 - After being in a public place
- Wash your hands well with soap and water. Have people around you wash their hands well, too.
- Check with your doctor or nurse about when to use hand sanitizer.

Stay extra clean.

- Brush your teeth after meals and before you go to bed. Use a very soft toothbrush.
- If you have a catheter, keep the area around it clean and dry. Learn from your nurse how to take care of this area.

Try to stay away from germs.

- Stay away from people who are sick or have a cold. Try to stay away from big crowds if you can.
- Wash raw fruits and vegetables very well.
- Wash your hands carefully after you handle raw meat. Cook meat well before eating it.
- Try to stay away from people who have just had a chicken pox, polio, or measles vaccine.
- Have someone else clean up after your pet.

Try not to get cuts.

- Use an electric shaver, not a razor.
- Clean yourself well and gently after going to the bathroom. Let your nurse know if your rectal area is sore or bleeds.
- **Don't** squeeze pimples.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What other steps can I take to prevent an infection?
3. How and when should I take my temperature?
4. What problems should I go to the emergency room for?

Write the number to call in an emergency here:



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Memory Changes



“My nurse said that during treatment it may be hard to concentrate. I put important dates on the calendar. I also taped notes on the door to help me remember things.”

You or a family member should call your doctor or nurse if you:

- **Feel confused**
- **Feel very sad or depressed**
- **Have a hard time thinking or remembering things**

What is causing these changes?

Your doctor will work to find out what is causing these problems. They may be caused by stress or a medicine you are taking. Or, they may be caused by the cancer, cancer treatment, or other health problems.

Use the check list below to get helpful tips:

Plan your day.

- Do things that need the most thinking at the time of day when you feel best.
- Get extra rest.

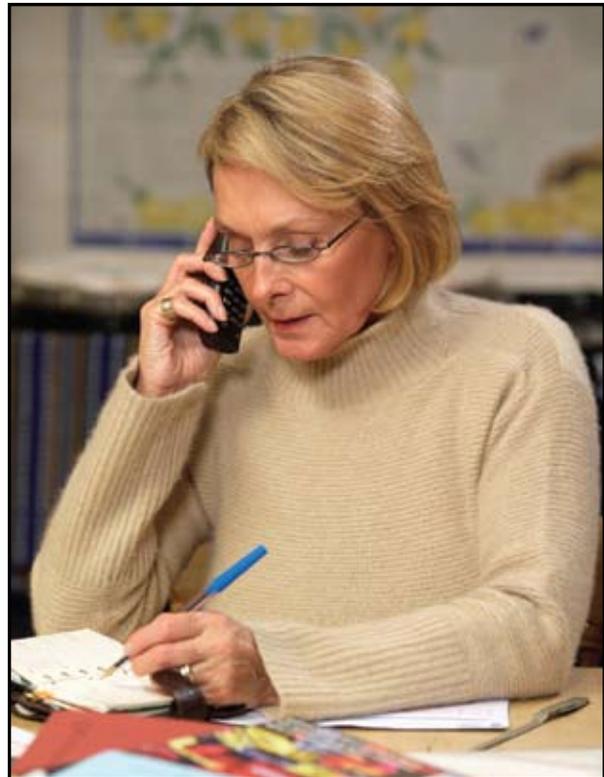


Get help to remember things.

- Write down or tape record things you want to remember.
- Write down important dates and information on a calendar.
- Use a pill box or calendar to help keep track of your medicines.

Ask for help.

- Ask a friend or family member for extra help when you need it.
- Ask your nurse or social worker for help to keep track of medicines and clinic visits.
- If you are very confused, have someone stay with you. Don't stay home alone.



Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What could be causing these problems?
3. Is there medicine that can help me?
4. What other tips can you give me that might help?
5. How long will these problems last?

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NIH Publication No. 09-6510
Reprinted September 2009



Mouth and Throat Changes



“My mouth felt sore. I let my nurse know right away. He told me about medicine that can help. He also showed me how to make a mouth rinse to use each day.”

Call your doctor or nurse if you have:

- **Trouble eating or swallowing**
- **Painful spots or sores in your mouth**
- **Sores on your lips or in your mouth**

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have:

- Changes in taste or smell
- Dry mouth (little or no saliva)
- Pain when you eat hot or cold foods

Take these steps:

Clean your mouth with care.

- Brush your teeth and tongue after each meal and before you go to bed. Use a very soft toothbrush or cotton swabs.
- Use toothpaste or gel that has fluoride in it.
- Rinse your mouth with the baking soda, salt, and water mix in the box below.

Every 3 hours during the day, mix together:

- **1 cup warm water,**
- **1/4 teaspoon baking soda, and**
- **1/8 teaspoon salt.**

Take small sips and swish them around in your mouth. Then rinse with plain water.





Don't have things that can make your mouth hurt.

- **Don't** drink orange, lemon, tomato, or grapefruit juice.
- **Don't** drink alcohol, such as beer or wine.
- **Don't** eat crunchy or spicy foods.
- **Don't** have foods or drinks that have sugar in them, such as candy and soft drinks.
- **Don't** smoke cigarettes or use other tobacco products.

Keep your mouth and lips moist.

- Use a lip balm.
- Sip water or suck ice chips.
- Try drinking through a straw.

Eat soft, bland foods.

- Choose foods that are soft, wet, and easy to swallow. When your mouth is sore, try cooked cereals, mashed potatoes, and scrambled eggs.
- Soften food with gravy, sauce, or other liquids.
- Let food cool down if hot food hurts your mouth.

Ask for pain medicine if your mouth or throat is sore.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What foods and drinks should I have?
3. Can we make the baking soda, salt, and water mix together?
4. What kind of toothpaste is best for me?
5. If brushing hurts, what are other ways that I can clean my mouth?
6. What medicines can help?

Visit a dentist at least 2 weeks before you start treatment. Get all of your dental work done before you start chemotherapy, if at all possible. Get a copy of the report from your dentist and give it to your doctor or nurse.



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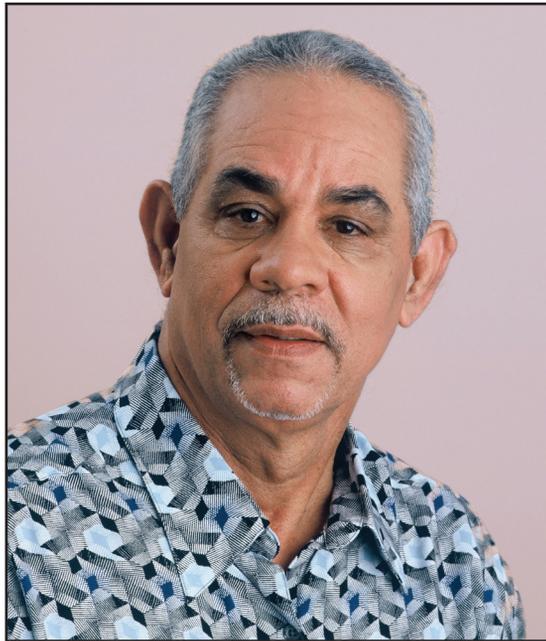
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Nausea and Vomiting



“I take medicine so I won’t feel sick to my stomach or vomit. My doctor and I had to try a few different kinds of medicine before we found one that worked for me.”

Call your doctor or nurse if the medicine is not working and you have nausea or vomiting.

What are nausea and vomiting?

Nausea is when you feel sick to your stomach, like you are going to throw up. Vomiting is when you throw up. You will most likely feel better on days you don’t get chemotherapy.

Take these steps to feel better:

Take your anti-nausea medicine.

- Talk with your doctor or nurse to make sure you are taking your medicine the right way.
- It’s very important to take your medicine—even on days you are feeling well.

Stay away from some foods.

- Eat less greasy, fried, salty, sweet, or spicy foods.
- If the smell of food bothers you, ask others to cook for you. Then let the food cool down before you eat it.

Have enough to eat and drink.

- Take small sips of water during the day, if you find it hard to drink a full glass at one time.
- Eat 5 or 6 small meals during the day, instead of 3 big meals.

Choose foods from the list on the other side of this sheet.

On days you get treatment:

- Deep breathing and meditation help some people to relax before treatment.
- Learn the best time for you to eat and drink. Some people feel better when they eat a little just before treatment. Others feel better when they have nothing to eat or drink before treatment.
- After treatment, wait at least 1 hour before you eat or drink.
- Acupuncture lowers nausea and/or vomiting in some people. Talk with your nurse to learn more about acupuncture and other ways to feel better during treatment.

These foods and drinks may be easy on your stomach:

Soups	Drinks	Main meals and snacks	Fruits and sweets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear broth, such as chicken, beef, and vegetable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear soda, such as ginger ale • Cranberry or grape juice • Oral rehydration drinks, such as Pedialyte® • Tea • Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chicken—broiled or baked without the skin • Cream of wheat or rice cereal • Crackers or pretzels • Oatmeal • Pasta or noodles • Potatoes—boiled, without the skin • White rice • White toast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bananas • Canned fruit such as applesauce, peaches, and pears • Gelatin (Jell-O®) • Popsicles and sherbet • Yogurt (plain or vanilla) 

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What foods should I try to eat more of? Which foods should I eat less of?
3. How much liquid should I try to drink every day?
4. What medicine can help? When should I take it?
5. Would you give me the name of a specialist who can tell me more about practices, such as acupuncture, that may help me feel better?
6. Would you give me the name of a nutritionist, so I can learn more about what foods to eat?



How can we help?

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)

Web: www.cancer.gov

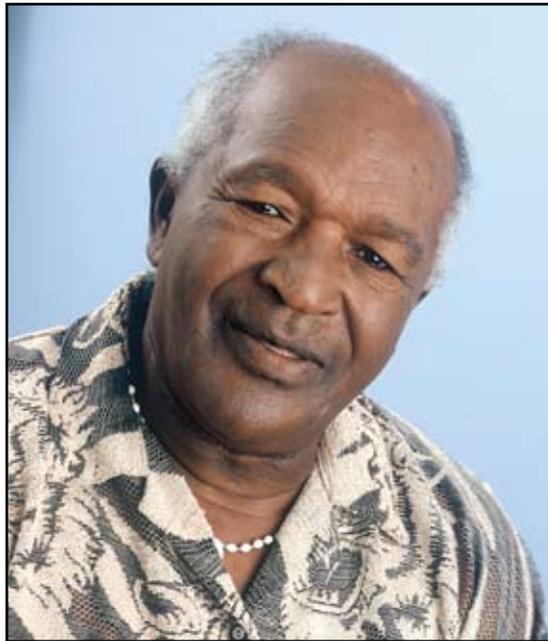
Online Chat: www.cancer.gov/livehelp

NCI has a series of 18 Chemotherapy Side Effects Sheets at:

www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects



Nerve Changes



“My fingers and toes felt numb and tingly. It was hard to button shirts. I got help from my wife. To keep from getting cuts, I always wore shoes.”

About nerve changes

Some chemotherapy can cause nerve problems. You may have a numb, tingling, burning, or weak feeling in different parts of your body. It often begins in your hands or feet. This is called “peripheral neuropathy.”

Ask what you should expect. Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn about medicine or other things that can help you.

Call your doctor or nurse as soon as you notice any of these changes:

Pain

- Tingling, burning, or weak feeling in your hands or feet
- Pain when you walk

Movement problems

- Falling
- Losing your balance or feeling dizzy
- Numb hands or feet
- Shaking or trembling
- Sore, tired, or achy muscles
- Trouble holding or picking things up

Hearing problems

- Trouble hearing

Stomach problems

- Hard stools or constipation
- Stomach pain



Try these tips from others:

“Prevent falls.”

- Move rugs out of your path so you won't trip.
- Put up rails on the walls and in the bathroom.
- Put bathmats in the shower and bathtub.
- Wear sturdy shoes.
- Use a cane.



“Take extra care in the kitchen and shower.”

- Use hot pads in the kitchen to protect your hands from burns.
- Before you bathe, ask someone to make sure the water in the bath or shower is not too hot.



“Protect your hands and feet.”

- Wear shoes inside and outside your home.
- Wear gloves when you are working outside or in the kitchen.
- Check your feet for cuts every day. Sit down and use a small mirror or ask someone to check for you.
- Use ice packs to help your hands and feet feel better.



“Ask for help.”

- Ask for help with things such as buttoning clothes, using the computer, opening jars, or holding a pen.
- Slow down and give yourself more time to do things.



Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What medicine can help?
3. Can you give me the name of a physical therapist or someone who can help me?
4. When will these problems start?
5. How long will these problems last?

FREE SERVICES TO LEARN MORE

National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Service

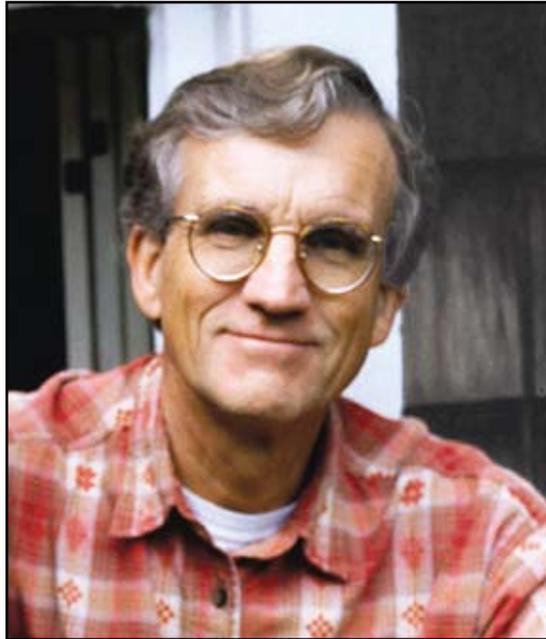
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NIH Publication No. 09-6506
Reprinted September 2009



Pain



“I was worried about getting addicted to pain medicine. Then I talked with my doctor. She told me that **treating pain is an important part of good cancer treatment**. So now I take my pain medicine on time and am able to enjoy life more!”

Call the doctor or nurse if:

- **The pain isn't getting better or going away**
- **The pain comes on quickly**
- **The pain makes it hard to eat, sleep, work, or play**
- **You feel new pain**
- **The pain medicine is not working as fast or for as long as it used to**

It's important to treat pain.

If you find that you are in pain, don't put up with it. There are many medicines to help lower or get rid of pain. Talk with your doctor to learn about medicine that can help you. Ask what other things, like massage or acupuncture, could also help. Remember, being in less pain will help you feel stronger and better.

Give your doctor or nurse a list of all of the medicines you are taking.

Tips to get the most out of your pain medicine:

- Ask **how much** pain medicine to take. Take the right amount of medicine each time you are supposed to.
- Ask **when** to take the pain medicine. Take the pain medicine on time. If you take the pain medicine too late, it may not work as well.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if the pain does not go away after you take the medicine.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you are in pain, but it's not yet time to take the pain medicine.
- Don't stop taking the pain medicine unless your doctor tells you to.
- Talk with your doctor, nurse, or social worker if you need help to pay for pain medicine.

Keep track of the pain.

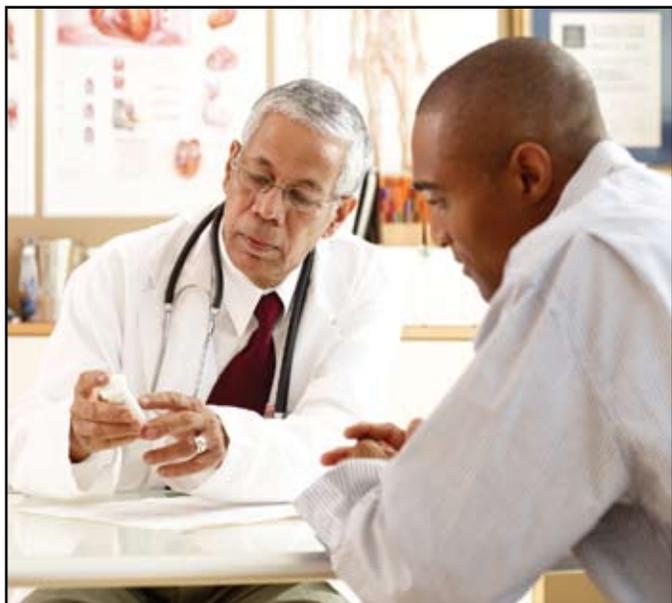
Each day, write about any pain you feel. This will help you talk with your doctor or nurse. Use a notebook or separate piece of paper to fill in the information below.

1. The pain is dull, sharp, burning, shooting, throbbing, or: _____
(Add your own words if these don't describe the pain you feel.)
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, where "10" is the most pain and "1" is the least pain, I feel this much pain: _____
3. I feel the most pain when: _____
4. Things I can't do because of the pain: _____
5. This makes the pain feel worse: _____
6. This makes the pain feel better: _____

Tell your doctor or nurse if you:

- Feel sick to your stomach
- Feel sleepy
- Have constipation or dry stools

If these problems don't go away on their own after a few days, they can usually be treated.



You may need more or different pain medicine.

It is normal for your body to get used to the pain medicine. It may not work as well as it did at first. This is called "tolerance." It happens to many people. If this happens to you, your doctor may change your pain medicine or change the way you take it.

You will not get addicted when cancer pain medicines are given and taken in the right way. Don't be afraid to ask for more pain medicine if you're still in pain.

When it is time to stop taking pain medicine, your doctor will have you take a little less pain medicine each day. This will help your body get used to the change.

FREE SERVICES TO LEARN MORE

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NIH Publication No. 09-6453
Reprinted September 2009



Skin and Nail Changes



“I was glad to learn that most skin and nail problems go away after treatment. For now, my nurse told me about a lotion to help my skin feel better.”

Call your doctor or nurse if:

- You develop sudden or severe itching
- Your skin has a rash or hives

Let your doctor or nurse know if:

- Your skin is itchy, dry, red, or hurts
- Your nails are dark, yellow, or cracked

For minor skin problems:

Be careful what you put on your skin.

- Use only mild soaps that are gentle on your skin.
- Use lotions and creams. Ask your nurse when to use them.
- **Don't** use products on your skin that have alcohol or perfume in them.

Ask what products or brands you should use on your skin.





Protect your skin from the sun.

- Try to stay out of the sun.
- When you are outside, always wear sunscreen and lip balm. Or wear a long-sleeved shirt, pants, and a hat with a wide brim outdoors.
- **Don't** use tanning beds.

Treat your skin gently.

- It may help to take short showers or baths in warm water. Don't take long baths in hot water. Pat your skin dry instead of rubbing it.
- Dusting your skin with cornstarch may help. Put it in the folds of your skin such as under your arms, behind your knees, and under your breasts.
- Shave less often, or stop shaving if your skin is sore.

For minor nail problems:

- Keep your nails clean and cut short. Check with your nurse before you get a manicure.
- Wear gloves when you wash the dishes, work in the garden, or clean the house.
- Check with your nurse for products that can help your nails.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What brands of soap and lotion are best for me to use?
3. What should the SPF (sun protection factor) be in the sunscreen and lip balm that I use?
4. Would a special oatmeal bath help my skin to itch less?
5. What products can help my nails?
6. When will these problems go away?
7. After treatment, how much longer will I need to use sunscreen?

FREE SERVICES TO LEARN MORE

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**NIH Publication No. 09-6450
Reprinted September 2009**



Swelling

(Fluid retention)



“My hands and feet were swollen and puffy. My nurse helped me understand why I had to stop eating salty foods.”

Call your doctor or nurse if you:

- **Feel short of breath**
- **Have a heartbeat that seems different or is not regular**
- **Have sudden swelling or swelling that is getting worse**
- **Gain weight quickly**
- **Don't urinate at all or urinate only a little**

What causes swelling?

Swelling can be caused by the chemotherapy. Some types of cancer or hormone changes can also cause swelling. So can other health problems.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have these changes:

- Swelling in your face, hands, arms, legs, or feet
- Swelling or bloating in your stomach or lower belly

Take these steps to prevent swelling:

Get comfortable.

- Ask about special stockings.
- Wear loose clothing and shoes that are not too tight.

Raise your feet.

- Raise your feet when you can. Sit or lie down and put your feet up on a stool. Or raise them with pillows.
- Try not to stand or walk too much at one time.



Weigh yourself.

- Weigh yourself at the same time every day.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you gain weight.

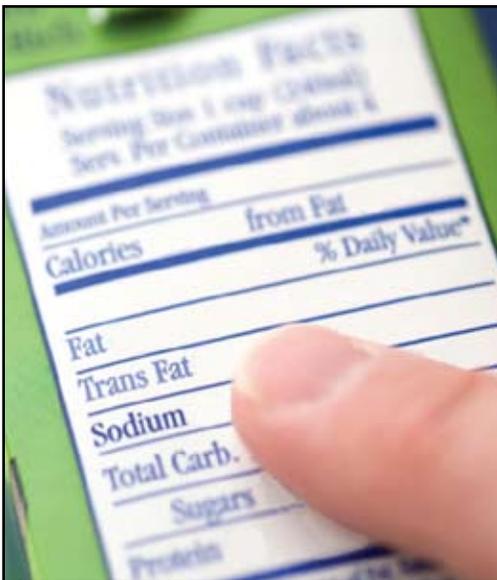


Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. How much weight gain should I call you about?
3. What foods should I eat less of?
4. What can help me feel better?

Stay away from salt.

- Don't eat food such as chips, bacon, ham, or canned soups. These have a lot of salt (sodium) in them.
- Don't add salt or soy sauce to your food.
- Check the food label to see if the food has sodium in it. Ask your nurse how much salt or sodium you can have.



FREE SERVICES TO LEARN MORE

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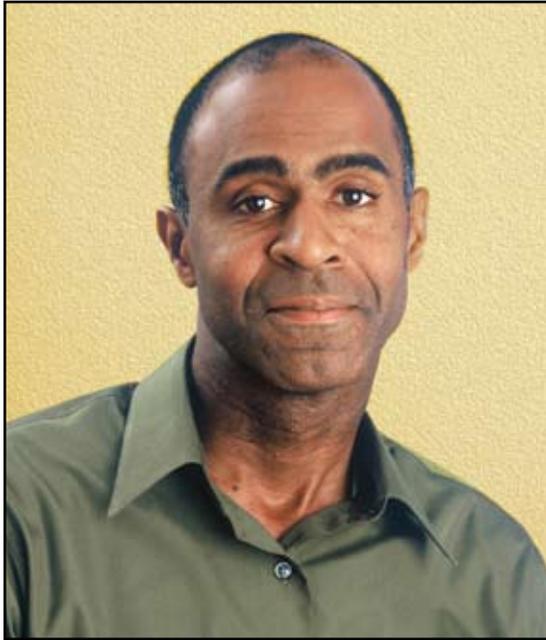


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NIH Publication No. 10-6454
Reprinted April 2010



Urination Changes



“My nurse told me how important it was to drink lots of water. She told me what changes to call about, such as a fever or pain.”

Call your doctor or nurse if you have:

- **A fever of 100.5° F (38° C) or higher**
- **Chills**
- **Blood in your urine, or you are not able to urinate**
- **Pain or burning when you urinate**

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have any of these changes:

- A strong urge to urinate more often
- Urine that is cloudy, or is a different color, such as orange, red, green, or dark yellow
- Urine that has a strong smell
- Trouble urinating

It is common for your urine to change color or smell different during chemotherapy. Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn what changes you should expect and ways to best manage them.





Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. How much should I drink each day?
3. What liquids are best for me?
4. Are there liquids that I should drink **less of**?
5. Are there liquids that I should **not** drink?



Learn about liquids.

Drink more liquids.

- Drink liquids such as water, soup, milkshakes, and cranberry juice. Add extra water to the juice.
- Ask your doctor or nurse how many cups of liquid you should drink each day. Most people need to drink at least 8 cups a day.

Keep drinking liquids even if you have to go to the bathroom a lot. Liquids help your body to work well.

Some liquids can make bladder problems worse.

Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn what you should stop drinking or drink less of. These include:

- Drinks with caffeine, such as coffee, black tea, and soda.
- Drinks with alcohol, such as beer, wine, mixed drinks, and liquor.

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NIH Publication No. 10-6455
Reprinted April 2010



Sexual and Fertility Changes in Women



“Talk with your doctor before you start treatment. Ask how chemotherapy could affect your ability to have children.”

Chemotherapy can harm an unborn baby (fetus). Ask what birth control methods you or your partner should use.

Ask what changes you may have.

Talk with your doctor or nurse **before treatment starts** to learn what sexual changes or changes to your fertility you may have.

The changes you may have depend on the kind of chemotherapy you’ll be getting and the type of cancer you have. Your age and other health issues are also important.

Questions from women about sexual problems:

What sexual problems might I have?

You might have:

- Dryness or itchy feeling in the vagina
- Hot flashes
- Infections of the vagina or bladder
- Periods that are not regular or no periods (menstruation)
- Stress, fatigue, or little interest in sex

Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn how to manage these changes. Ask how they can be treated and how long these problems may last.



Tips from other women:



“Hot flashes were easier to handle when I carried a small hand fan. I also wore a short-sleeved shirt under my sweater, so I could take my sweater off during a hot flash.”



“I used a cream to help with vaginal dryness, and I used a lubricant to feel more comfortable when I had sex.”

Ask your nurse what products or brands can help.

How can I get help to cope?

Be open and honest with your partner. Talk about your feelings and concerns. Find new ways to show love and be close. It may also help to talk with a doctor, nurse, social worker, counselor, or people in a support group.

Do I need to use birth control?

Yes, all women who have not gone through menopause should use birth control. Or their partner should use a method of birth control. Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn what you should do. **Don't get pregnant during treatment**, because it can harm an unborn baby (fetus).

Questions from women about changes in fertility:

Will I be able to have children after treatment?

If you would like to have children, talk with your doctor **before you start treatment**. Your doctor can talk with you about your choices and refer you to a fertility specialist.

Talk with your doctor or nurse to learn about special instructions to follow.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What can help with sexual problems?
3. Can you give me the name of a social worker or counselor who I can talk with?
4. What birth control method would you suggest that my partner or I use?
5. What can I do now if I would like to have children in the future?
6. Can you give me the name of a fertility specialist who can tell me more?
7. After treatment is over, how long do I need to keep using birth control?

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