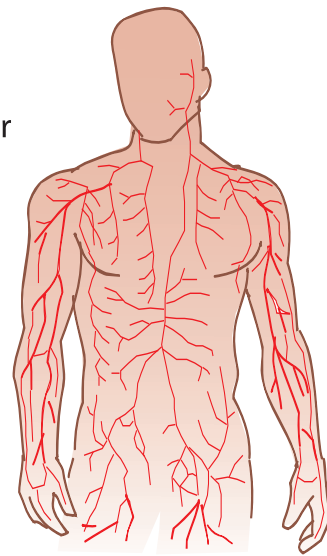


Chemotherapy Explained

Chemotherapy is a treatment that uses drugs designed to destroy or prevent further growth of cancer cells. Chemotherapy is a **systemic treatment**, meaning that the drugs flow through the bloodstream to nearly every part of the body.

Often, two or more chemotherapy drugs are used together in combination therapy to enhance their effectiveness. Chemotherapy can be used in conjunction with surgery or radiation treatment. Chemotherapy given before surgery and/or radiation is called **neoadjuvant therapy**. Chemotherapy given with radiation or after surgery is known as **adjuvant therapy**.



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Chemotherapy can be used to

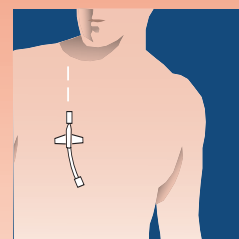
- Stop cancer from spreading
- Slow the growth of cancer
- Relieve symptoms that are caused by cancer
- Cure cancer

How long will chemotherapy last?

Chemotherapy is usually administered on an outpatient basis. Treatments are commonly given in cycles, with a treatment period followed by a rest period. Your doctor will design the treatment cycle that is appropriate for you.

How chemotherapy is given:

- **By mouth** in tablet, capsule, or liquid form
- **Intravenously** (often called IV). Chemotherapy is delivered through a vein. A fine needle is inserted into a vein in the hand or lower arm at the beginning of each treatment and removed at the end of the treatment
- **By IV through a catheter**. A catheter is a soft, flexible tube that is placed in a large vein and remains there as long as necessary for treatment. The catheter is usually placed in the upper chest. Sometimes a catheter is attached to a “port”—a tiny disk with an opening—that is placed under the skin
- **Topically**. Medication is applied directly onto the surface of the skin
- **By injection** with a needle and syringe



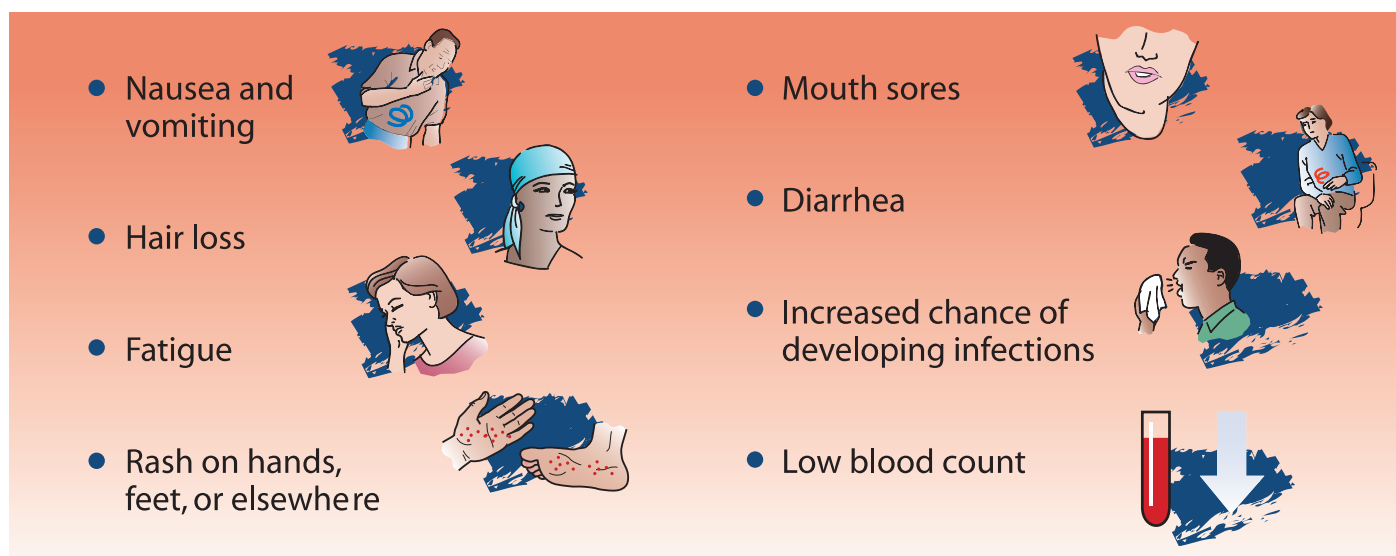
Chemotherapy Explained (cont'd)









Does chemotherapy hurt?

An IV may be uncomfortable when first inserted into the vein; you should not feel any pain after that. Alert your nurse immediately if you feel any pain or see redness or swelling around the IV site.

Managing the side effects of chemotherapy treatment

Side effects, and the degree to which they are experienced, vary from person to person. Most side effects disappear once treatment has stopped. Common side effects of chemotherapy may include the following:



- Nausea and vomiting 
- Mouth sores 
- Hair loss 
- Diarrhea 
- Fatigue 
- Increased chance of developing infections 
- Rash on hands, feet, or elsewhere 
- Low blood count 

Speak with your doctor about which side effects you may experience and how they can be managed effectively. There are medications available to prevent some side effects before they occur.

Some medicines you are already taking may affect your chemotherapy. Remember to give your doctor a list of all medications and over-the-counter products (including vitamins, herbal supplements, etc.) that you are taking before you begin your chemotherapy.

Questions to ask your treatment team

- What can I expect from my chemotherapy?
- How long will I be on chemotherapy?
- How will I know if the chemotherapy is working?
- What are the possible side effects, and how long will they last?
- What can I do to keep side effects to a minimum?
- What is the likelihood of remission?



Remember: Communication between you and your doctor is essential to the success of your treatment. It is important that you and your caregiver understand the answers to your questions, so do not hesitate to ask for further clarification if needed.