

## Information From The Experts

### In Treatment

#### Tips for managing side effects of cancer treatment

*The information contained in this document conveys general information and is not intended to be, nor should be used as, a replacement for the advice of a licensed physician. Your doctor knows your specific condition. Always consult with a doctor for medical advice or information about diagnosis, treatment and supportive care.*

Cancer treatment is given for different reasons, including, to cure cancer, control cancer or relieve the symptoms of cancer. Everyone is unique and responds to treatment differently. Side effects can occur as a result of treatment. Some side effects of cancer treatment are easily controlled and others require more specific care.

Different cancer treatments can lead to different side effects. Before starting cancer treatment, your doctor will discuss potential side effects that you may be likely to experience. Every person does not get every side effect and some people get more than others. To help you prepare for treatment, you may want to ask a few questions:

- ▶ Which side effects are most common with my treatment?
- ▶ How severe can the side effects be?
- ▶ How long could the side effects last?
- ▶ When should I contact a doctor about my side effects?

It can also help your doctor treat your side effects if you keep a record or diary of when you experience certain problems and share this information with your doctor or nurse during your visits.

#### Specific side effects

Many cancer treatments can cause bouts of nausea and vomiting. There are medications that work well to control these side effects, and your doctor can help you find the right one. Here are some steps you can take that can help you feel better:

- ▶ Avoid greasy or fried foods and those with strong flavours such as salty, sweet or spicy.
- ▶ If the smell of food makes you feel sick, try cold or frozen foods and ask those around you to cook for you.

- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration, even just small sips of water.
- ▶ Eat more small meals rather than fewer big meals.

Fatigue is also a common side effect of many cancer treatments. As with other side effects, your doctor can advise you on how to cope with fatigue during treatment. It may help to make a plan to conserve energy. This could include:

- ▶ Prioritising activities so the most important get done first
- ▶ Asking for help from those around you
- ▶ Taking time off from work or reducing your hours
- ▶ Taking time to rest when you feel tired

Diarrhoea can be a side effect of certain cancer treatments, but there are things you can do to manage this side effect. Your doctor can prescribe medicine to help with diarrhoea. It is important to get your doctor's advice on any medication, even those without prescriptions, as some may interfere with your cancer treatment. Some tips for managing diarrhoea include:

- ▶ Eating foods that are easy to digest, such as bananas, applesauce and white rice
- ▶ Drinking more liquids each day to replenish the fluids you are losing with diarrhoea
- ▶ Avoiding foods that can make diarrhoea worse, such as dairy, spicy foods, high fibre foods, raw fruits and vegetables, alcohol and caffeine

Skin reactions are a common side effect of some targeted therapies used to treat cancer. There are some precautions you can take and effective ways to manage these skin side effects, so it is important to speak with your doctor if you begin to experience symptoms. Symptoms may include:

- ▶ redness or warm sensation on the face that may feel like a sunburn
- ▶ pimples or red bumps on the face, neck and upper chest or back
- ▶ skin that may become tender and itchy

Although skin reactions can cause physical discomfort as well as distress with one's appearance, early and effective treatments for these reactions are available. Here are some tips that may help avoid reactions or relieve them if they do occur:

- ▶ Avoid the sun and use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15.
- ▶ Wear a broad-brimmed hat or other protective head and neck covering.

- ▶ Bathe with luke-warm water and use a mild soap. Avoid soaps and laundry detergents with strong scents or perfumes.
- ▶ Apply unscented hypoallergenic moisturisers within 15 minutes of bathing to dry areas.
- ▶ Avoid anti-acne and other skin products containing benzoyl peroxide or retinoids that can dry out your skin.
- ▶ Your doctor may prescribe moisturisers with specific ingredients, or topical medicated creams, such as corticosteroids, and in severe cases, oral corticosteroids and/or an antibiotic.

The side effects from treatment for lung cancer differ for everyone and are usually temporary. Your doctor or nurse can provide you with more information on possible side effects of your treatment, and ways to effectively deal with them both during and after treatment.