

Chemotherapy Side Effects: When Should I Worry?

Your nurse and doctor have already talked to you about the side effects of your chemotherapy treatment. This handout talks about the most common side effects and what to do. We suggest you keep it handy and easy to find (for example, on your fridge).

If the information on this sheet is not the same as what you have talked to your doctor and nurse about, please follow what your nurse or doctor told you.

Call 911 or go to the Emergency Department if...

- You have sudden chest pain.
- You have sudden shortness of breath when you are resting and/or you need to take a break every 5 to 15 seconds to catch your breath when talking.
- You feel like your heart is beating really fast.
- Your vomit is black and looks like coffee grounds or has fresh blood.
- You have a bowel movement that is black in colour or you have a lot of blood in your stool.
- You want to hurt yourself and/or somebody else.

Call **REACT clinic** at **905-813-4412** (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 3:00pm).

In the **evening** (Monday to Friday, 4:00 pm to 8:30 am), on **weekends and holidays** (24 hours), use **CareChart**:

- Call **1-877-681-3057**
- Connect over video call at www.carechart.ca
- Use the CareChart Digital Health app

Or go to the **Emergency Department** if you have:

- You have bleeding that will not stop after 10 minutes of applying pressure.
- Fever of 38.3°C or higher.
- Fever of 38 to 38.2°C.
 - Do not take Tylenol® (acetaminophen) or Advil® (ibuprofen)
 - Wait for 1 hour, recheck your temperature
 - If 38°C or above for 1 hour, call REACT. If the clinic is closed or it is an evening or weekend, go to the nearest emergency department
- You have sudden severe pain that does not go away after you have taken your pain medication.
- You vomit 7 or more times in less than 24 hours
- You have taken your anti-diarrhea medications and you still have had diarrhea 7 or more times in one day.
- You are not able to swallow fluids or food for more than 24 hours.

At your next appointment tell your nurse and oncologist if you had to go to the REACT Clinic or the EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Call your Nurse or Family Doctor within 24 hours if...

- You feel weak or dizzy.
- You feel so fatigued, every day, that it is difficult to leave your bed, take part in your normal activities or if you need to sit or sleep most of the day.
- You feel sad or depressed. You find activities that normally made you happy no longer do. You feel worthless or guilty.
- You worry most days or you feel sudden fear, discomfort, anxiety or unsettled.
- You are sleeping more or less than normal.
- You have lost or gained more weight than what is normal for you.
- You cannot eat more than half of all your meals.
- You cannot swallow or eat foods for more than 24 hours but are still able to drink fluids.
- You cannot do your daily activities because of your pain or pain medications. You do not feel that your pain medications are helping with your pain.
- You find it more difficult to breathe when you are resting or completing your daily activities, such as climbing stairs.
- You feel nauseous but you can still eat without vomiting and your medications do not help.
- You have vomited 2 to 5 times in less than 24 hours even after taking anti-nausea medications.
- You have not had a bowel movement for 2 to 3 days more than normal for you and the medications you have been given for constipation are not working.
- You have taken your anti-diarrhea medications and you still have had diarrhea 4 to 6 times in one day.
- You have sores and/or white patches in your mouth or your gums or mouth bleed easily.
- You have skin changes such as peeling, blisters, bleeding, swelling or pain.
- You have swelling, pain, redness or warmth in one of your legs or arms.

** If your symptoms become worse or you cannot reach your nurse or family doctor within 24 hours, call REACT. If the clinic is closed, go straight to your nearest emergency department.

Tell your doctor and nurse at your next visit if...

- You have any symptoms that have gotten better with medications.

Important Note: This resource was created by Trillium Health Partners to give patients, families and caregivers general information about what to do about chemotherapy side effects. The information in this resource does not replace medical advice. Every effort has been made to ensure information in this resource is complete, correct and up-to-date but no guarantee is made to that effect. If you have any questions or concerns about the information in this resource, please talk to your healthcare team.

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