



**Ironwood Cancer
& Research Centers**

Outsmarting Cancer One Patient at a Time™

Chemotherapy

Resource Guide

www.ironwoodcrc.com
www.ironwoodwomenscenters.com



Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers

Outsmarting Cancer One Patient at a Time™

Thank you for choosing us as your oncology provider and for allowing us to help you during this difficult and challenging time in your life.

We understand that the thought of chemotherapy can cause stress and anxiety and that you may have many questions and concerns regarding your treatment. We will do all we can to make the process easier for you and your family.

This book contains information on our practice, detailed information on the chemotherapy process and side effects, as well as a glossary of terms and where to go for more assistance.

We are honored to be part of your cancer care team and encourage you to communicate with us openly about any questions or concerns so that we may better support you.

Your personalized care is our number one priority.

How to Contact Us

Calling Ironwood Cancer and Research Centers

Your Doctor: _____ Contact Number: _____

Your Nurse: _____ Contact Number: _____

www.ironwoodcrc.com

Nurses and staff are available during regular business hours to assist our patients. If you are having problems, have questions or need test results, call the office phone number and follow the voicemail prompts. Leave a message and someone will call you back. All calls are triaged based on priority and messages are checked frequently throughout the day. We make every effort to return all calls by the end of each business day.

When leaving a message

- Be sure to say and spell your name clearly and provide your birth date.
- Please leave a clear and detailed message.
- Leave a number where you can be reached readily when we return your call. If you would like us to leave you a message please give verbal authorization to do so.
- When requesting a medication refill, please include the name of the drug, dose of the drug, quantity needed and your pharmacy's phone number.

After hours and weekends

- For urgent needs after hours, please call the physician on call by dialing the main office number. You will need to take all blocks off of your phone to enable the physician to call you back.
- When calling the oncologist on call, please have the following information available:
 - Your oncologist's name and your diagnosis
 - Your treatment plan and the date of your last treatment
 - A 24-hour pharmacy phone number in case prescriptions are needed

About Us

We don't think that anyone should get cancer

At Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers, we evaluate you and develop a personalized treatment plan specifically to ensure the best outcome. We wish you didn't have to see us under these circumstances, but we appreciate the opportunity to use our education, expertise, compassion, and technology to address your medical condition.

We take pride in our team

Ironwood Physicians, P.C., is the largest private physician group focused on academic cancer care in a community setting. Our cancer physicians are board-certified in Oncology (the study of cancer) and many of them are also board-certified in Hematology (the study of blood). Ironwood offers a multi-disciplinary team including Breast Surgeons, Gynecologic Oncologists, Integrative Oncologist, Genetic Counselors and Urology providers.

Collectively, our physicians have been trained by the most renowned institutions in the country: UC Davis, Wayne State, MD Anderson, Loyola University, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Cleveland Clinic, Baylor College of Medicine, Penn State, Temple University, Thomas Jefferson University, Northwestern University and Tufts, just to name a few.

Our doctors have been widely published and belong to prestigious groups such as the American College of Physicians, have served as Chief Residents, and have been recognized as "Top Docs" by *PHOENIX* magazine.

Our Physicians and staff collaborate with each other to discuss the best possible options for your care. When necessary, we consult with specialists across the country.

Most importantly, our physicians want you to know that you are not a "number." They work hard to get to know you and your family and encourage you to communicate openly with them.

Physicians are available/on call 24 hours a day for your health-related problems.

Our science and technology are state-of-the-art

We have linear accelerators to provide IMRT treatments and Stereotactic Radiosurgery and also have brachytherapy vaults for radiation treatment. Our Surgical Urology team members are da Vinci trained. Our Diagnostic departments allow patients access to ACR certified radiology equipment for PET/CT and CT. Our PET and CT scanners are not only certified by the American College of Radiology, but they are also the newest technology, allowing us to obtain optimum images while minimizing the patient's exposure to radiation.

During the course of your treatment at Ironwood Physicians you may have a PET or CT scan. Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers has contracted with Arizona Diagnostic Radiology Group, LLC, to interpret or read your scan results. You will/may be receiving two statements for your CT or PET/CT scan. One statement will be from Ironwood Physicians, P.C., for your actual CT or PET/CT scan and an additional statement from Arizona Diagnostic Radiology Group, LLC, for their professional interpretation of the CT or PET/CT scan.

Research/clinical trials are important to us

Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers has a very active research department, which allows our patients to have access to the latest research and clinical trials. Patients interested in clinical trials may discuss the relevance of a trial with their physician at any time.

We recognize the importance of your emotional well-being

Studies have shown that patients who are supported mind, body and spirit do much better when faced with cancer. Patients report less pain, are better able to cope with diagnosis, treatment and side effects, and have greater feeling of personal growth when they receive the support they need.

Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers offers support, education, and resources to patients and families. Our Social Workers are available to help with the emotional, psychosocial, financial, and spiritual needs. We are able to provide resources, information and free supplies such as scarves, hats, wigs, and more. Support groups, educational events, and nutritional consults are available monthly and our Patient Support Volunteers and Oncology Massage Therapists assist and comfort patients and families during treatment.

We know that the financial side of cancer care is often stressful. For that reason, we have Benefits Coordinators (also called “Financial Counselors”) that will help you understand your insurance benefits, identify the costs related to treatment and help you enroll in financial assistance programs.



About the Ironwood tree

The Ironwood tree, with its dense wood, lush canopy, and deep roots can grow up to 45 feet tall and live as long as 1,500 years. It is only found in the Sonoran Desert and is highly valued for its ability to nurse growing plants and animals by providing much needed shade, shelter and nutrients in an often-unforgiving environment. Much like the Ironwood tree in the Sonoran Desert, Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers and all of Ironwood Physicians, P.C., are devoted to providing hope to patients with cancer and help in focusing on the quality of life.

Treatment Checklist

Treatment Plan

Total number of treatments expected and frequency: _____

Approximate total infusion/treatment time: _____

Medications to take at home before treatment: _____

Pregnancy test needed at first treatment? **Y** **N**

Fertility sperm baking recommended? **Y** **N**

Injection needed after treatment: _____

Blood testing required and frequency: _____

Other test(s) before treatment starts: _____

Driver needed? **Y** **N**

Prescriptions given: _____

It is important that we have current blood test results before your treatment. Please have your blood drawn one to two days before your appointment or as directed by your doctor. Your treatment may be held or delayed if no results are available.

Chemotherapy Do's and Don'ts

Do

- Drink 6-8 8-ounce glasses of fluid each day
- Drink water, juices, Gatorade®, and/or sports drinks
- Eat foods that agree with you
- Maintain good oral hygiene
- Use salt/baking soda mouth rinse after meals and as needed
- Use a soft toothbrush
- Call the office if you have any abnormal bruising or prolonged bleeding, or fever of 100.5 degrees or greater
- Take medication for nausea and/or diarrhea, as instructed
- Wear sunscreen (SPF 15 or greater), hats and sunglasses
- Eat frequent, smaller meals
- Get plenty of rest
- Wash hands often, maintain daily hygiene
- Practice pregnancy prevention – birth control and condoms
- Call the office with any questions

Don't

- Drink caffeinated beverages (limited amounts OK)
- Eat spicy or highly-seasoned foods
- Use toothpicks or dental floss
- Take aspirin-containing products without your doctor's knowledge
- Eat large meals
- Expose yourself to people who are ill during your nadir period (the time after chemotherapy, when your immune system is most suppressed; usually 6-12 days after chemotherapy). See neutropenic precautions, page 12.
- Garden without protective gloves

Infusion Room Guide

The infusion room is an upbeat and positive place where our patients receive their chemotherapy treatment. We strive to make it comfortable and safe for everyone. Here are a few things you should know before coming to your first treatment:

- Eat normally and drink plenty of fluids before treatment.
- Snacks and drinks are available for our patients.
- You can get up to use the restroom when needed.
- Please limit cell phone use as a courtesy to those around you.
- There may be times when we will need to ask your guest to wait in the lobby.
- No children under the age of 12 are allowed in treatment room.
- Please avoid the use of heavy perfume or cologne. Chemotherapy patients are often sensitive to strong odors.

Things you may bring to your treatment

- A list of any questions you may have
- Food to eat during treatment. Please avoid foods with strong odors as a courtesy to our patients. Cold foods are best.
- Laptop computer (wireless internet is available)
- A blanket
- Books, hand-held games, cards, MP3 player

It can take 30 minutes or more from the time you check in or finish seeing the oncologist before your treatment actually starts. It takes some time to verify your chemotherapy order, review your lab results and prepare your medications. We appreciate your patience as we ensure safety and accuracy in all that we do. We make every effort to stay on schedule, but due to the special needs of our oncology patients, we may encounter unavoidable delays.

Side Effects of Chemotherapy

The following sections discuss the most common side effects of chemotherapy. Your oncologist and nurse will review your individual treatment plan and highlight the side effects specific to your treatment. It is important to notify your oncologist or nurse of any side effects you experience. Early treatment of side effects can help prevent further complications.

Altered Blood Counts

Chemotherapy kills rapidly growing and dividing cells. Cancer cells are rapidly growing and dividing cells. Chemotherapy can temporarily affect fast growing healthy cells as well, which include white blood cells, red blood cells, and platelets.

- The time period when your blood cell counts are lowest usually occurs 7 to 14 days after treatment. This is called the “nadir” period.
- Low blood counts may impact how you feel and can cause a delay of your next treatment.
- Lab results are available the day after they are drawn. You may call the office for your results.

Low Red Blood Cell Count (Anemia)

Red blood cells carry oxygen to the cells of your body. When your red blood cells are low you are anemic. Symptoms of anemia include:

- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Difficulty staying warm
- Rapid heart rate
- Your oncologist may prescribe an injection to increase the red blood cell count
- Blood transfusions may be necessary to replace red blood cells
- Things you can do to help tolerate the symptoms of anemia:
 - Pace your activities, limiting the amount of work done in a day
 - Get plenty of rest
 - Eat a well-balanced diet that is high in protein. Stand up slowly to avoid dizziness.

Side Effects of Chemotherapy

Low White Blood Cell Count (Neutropenia)

White blood cells fight infection. Anytime your white blood cell count drops you are at higher risk of getting an infection. Signs and symptoms of infection include:

- Oral temperature above 100.5° F, chills or sweats.
- Cough or shortness of breath.
- Coughing up secretions that are yellow or green in color.
- Soreness in your mouth, sores or white patches in your mouth or on your tongue.
- Pain or burning with urination.
- Changes in the character or frequency of your bowel movements, especially diarrhea.
- Redness, pain or swelling of any area of your skin.
- Pus or drainage from any open cut or sore.
- Fever and chills may be the only sign that you have an infection if white blood cell counts are low.
- Your oncologist may order an injection for you that will help to stimulate white blood cell production.
- Monitor your temperature and call if you have a temperature greater than 100.5° F or if you have shaking chills.
- Perform good personal hygiene daily.
- Wash your hands frequently, especially before eating and after using the bathroom.
- Avoid situations that will increase your chance of getting an infection.
 - Stay away from people with colds or other infections.
 - Avoid contact with anyone who has recently been vaccinated, including infants and children.
 - Avoid crowds as much as possible.
- Decrease the chance of injury and infection.
- Wear shoes to prevent injury to feet.
- Protect hands from cuts and burns.
- Use an electric razor to prevent breaks in the skin.
- Do not receive any vaccination unless your oncologist has approved it.
- If you cut or scrape your skin, clean and cover the injury.
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables.

Neutropenic Precautions

If your white blood cell count drops to a very low level, you will be considered neutropenic. Should this happen, there are special steps that you must take in order to decrease the chance of getting an infection. These precautions are called “Neutropenic Precautions.”

- Take your temperature by mouth four times each day. Call immediately if your temperature is above 100.5° F.
- Avoid fresh fruits and vegetables while on Neutropenic Precautions.
- Avoid uncooked meats such as sushi. All meats should be cooked until well done.
- Avoid enemas, rectal suppositories and rectal temperatures.
- Dental work should not be done during this time.
- If you have pets, someone else needs to clean up after them.

Low Platelet Count (Thrombocytopenia)

Platelets are blood cells that help blood to clot. When your platelet count is low you are at risk for bleeding.

- It is important to prevent injuries when platelets are low
 - Brush your teeth with a soft bristled tooth brush
 - Blow your nose gently
 - Use an electric razor
 - Avoid contact sports
 - Avoid using dental floss or toothpicks
 - Avoid using tampons, enemas, rectal suppositories or rectal thermometers
 - Keep stools soft by using a stool softener such as Senokot®
- If an injury with bleeding occurs, apply pressure to area. Call your oncologist if bleeding does not stop.
- For nosebleeds, apply pressure to the nostrils while remaining in an upright position. Apply ice to the nose, if necessary. Call your oncologist if bleeding continues.
- Aspirin, naproxen, and ibuprofen increase the risk of bleeding and shouldn't be used unless approved by your oncologist. Tylenol® is safe to use.
- Signs and symptoms of a low platelet count that should be reported to your oncologist include:
 - Bruising easily
 - Small, pinpoint-sized, red spots on the skin
 - Blood in the urine causing it to be pink or red in color

Side Effects of Chemotherapy

- Blood in the stool causing it to be black or red in color
- Bleeding from the gums or nose
- Heavy or prolonged bleeding during menstruation
- Vaginal bleeding not caused by menstruation
- Platelet transfusions may be necessary to replace platelets.
- Your oncologist may prescribe an injection to increase the platelet count.

Nausea and Vomiting

- Chemotherapy may cause nausea and vomiting.
- You may be given IV or oral anti-nausea medication with your treatment.
- Take your anti-nausea medication at the first sign of nausea or queasiness. Do not wait until vomiting occurs.
- Sometimes it is helpful to take anti-nausea medication on a regular schedule or every 4 to 6 hours the first few days after your chemotherapy treatment.
- If your anti-nausea medication is not effective, call your oncologist. Other medications are available.
- Call your oncologist if you have had prolonged vomiting or have been unable to keep liquids down for 24 hours.
- Some things you can do to help ease nausea and vomiting include:
 - Eat small meals and snacks throughout the day instead of 3 large meals.
 - Do not lay down right after you eat.
 - Avoid food and drinks with strong odors.
 - Avoid spicy and greasy foods.
 - Drink ginger ale or cola.
 - Suck on ice chips or popsicles (unless receiving Oxaliplatin®).
 - Eat foods at room temperature or slightly cooler to decrease odors.
 - Practice relaxation distraction techniques.
 - Ginger extract 250 mg capsules. Take 2 to 4 tablets daily for 6 days starting 3 days before chemotherapy.

Diarrhea

- Diarrhea can be defined as having several loose watery stools in a day.
- Some things you should do if you experience diarrhea include:
 - Start taking Imodium® according to the directions on the package or as directed by your oncologist or nurse.

- Continue taking Imodium® for 12 hours after the last loose stool.
- If diarrhea is not relieved after taking Imodium® for 24 hours, or abdominal pain and stomach cramping continue without relief, call your oncologist or nurse.
- Eat low fiber foods such as bananas, white rice, and white toast.
- Drink 8 to 10 cups of clear liquids a day, such as apple juice, ginger ale, tea, broth, and Jell-O®. It is important to replace the fluids that are lost with diarrhea. Rapid and excessive fluid loss or dehydration can be a serious condition resulting from diarrhea.
- Use alcohol-free baby wipes instead of toilet paper to minimize skin irritation.
- Some foods that may make diarrhea worse include:
 - Milk or milk products
 - Spicy, greasy food
 - Caffeine, chocolate, tea and cola
 - High fiber foods such as vegetables, nuts, fruits and whole grains

Constipation

- Some chemotherapy drugs and pain medications can cause constipation. Constipation is a decrease in the number of bowel movements or passing hard, dry stools.
- Some things you can do if you are experiencing constipation include:
 - Increase fluid intake to at least 8 glasses per day
 - Eat a low-fat, high-fiber diet
 - Engage in daily exercise, such as walking
- Constipation may cause nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, cramping or rectal bleeding from straining.
- The following bowel care protocol can be used:

USE DAILY: Senokot-S®. 2 tablets 1 to 2 times per day. You may increase the dose to 4 tablets twice per day.

AND bran, fruits or fiber supplements and drink plenty of fluids (8 to 10 glasses per day).

IF NO RESULTS: Milk of Magnesia®: 2 tablespoons 1 to 2 times per day.

IF NO BOWEL MOVEMENT IN 48 HOURS, CALL YOUR ONCOLOGIST OR NURSE.

Side Effects of Chemotherapy

Dehydration

Dehydration can be a complication from vomiting, diarrhea, fever or decreased intake of fluids. Symptoms of dehydration include:

- Low blood pressure
- Rapid heart rate
- Dizziness or feeling lightheaded when standing
- Dry mouth
- Rapid weight loss
- Confusion
- Dark colored urine or urinating less

Any of these symptoms should be reported to your oncologist.

Fatigue

Fatigue is a common side effect of chemotherapy and is experienced as a decrease in physical energy.

- Can be mild to severe and may increase through your treatment
- Some things you can do to prevent fatigue include:
 - Pace your activities with planned rest periods through the day.
 - Maintain good nutrition
 - Drink plenty of fluids
 - Engage in moderate daily exercise
 - Rest when you need to

Sore Mouth and Throat (Stomatitis/Mucositis)

Chemotherapy can cause irritation to the tissues of the mouth and throat. Symptoms of stomatitis include:

- Dry mouth
- Thick oral secretions
- Sores in the mouth
- White patches on the tongue or tissues of the mouth
- Red, irritated gums

- Pain
- Difficulty swallowing

Report symptoms of stomatitis to your oncologist or nurse. Some things you can do to help the symptoms of stomatitis include:

- Avoid mouthwash that contains alcohol. Brands that don't have alcohol include Tom's of Maine®, Rembrandt® and Biotene®.
- Use a soft bristle toothbrush
- Avoid flossing
- Avoid spicy or acidic foods
- To keep your mouth moist and help prevent sores, use salt and soda rinse after meals and at bedtime.
 - Mix 1 teaspoon of salt and 1 teaspoon of baking soda in 1 quart of water. Store in a closed container.
- If you have dentures, be sure to remove them and perform denture and oral care daily.

Hair Loss (Alopecia)

- Hair loss can be a side effect of chemotherapy. This can be a source of great emotional distress.
- Not all chemotherapy agents cause hair loss.
- The degree of hair loss depends on the type of chemotherapy you receive.
- Most hair will start to fall out approximately 2 weeks after your first treatment and will begin to grow back once all your treatments are completed.
- You may experience scalp tenderness while hair is coming out.
- It is important to protect your head from the cold and sun during this time.
- It is a good idea to shop for your wig before you start treatment.
- Most insurance companies will pay for a wig. A prescription for a wig will be provided, if needed. Check with your insurance provider to find out the wig allowance before going shopping for your wig.
- Consider participating in the “Look Good Feel Better” program. This is a great program during which a licensed cosmetologist and other chemotherapy patients can share hair and makeup tips.
- Limit the use of hairdryers, curling irons, and chemical such as dyes, perms, and highlights to help decrease damage to existing hair.

Side Effects of Chemotherapy

Numbness and Tingling (Neuropathy)

- Neuropathy is the result of chemotherapy irritating nerve endings.
- Neuropathy can cause uncomfortable and sometimes painful sensations that can be described as burning, numbness, stabbing, prickling or tingling.
- These symptoms are usually noticed in the fingers and toes first.
- Simple daily activities such as walking, driving, or dressing can become difficult and painful.
- Neuropathy will usually resolve after treatment is completed, but in some cases may worsen or become permanent.
- Please notify your oncologist or nurse if you are experiencing any of the above symptoms.
- Some things you can do if you experience neuropathy to prevent injury include:
 - Wear shoes with rubber soles and good support.
 - Check water temperatures carefully to avoid burns.
 - Walk slowly and use handrails when using stairs.
 - Be careful when handling sharp objects.

Sexual Changes

- Chemotherapy can remain in your body fluids for 48-72 hours. Care should be taken to protect your partner from your body fluids during this time. Use of a condom during sexual intercourse is advised.

Concerns for women:

- It is very important that women do not become pregnant while on chemotherapy and for some time after completing therapy.
- You may experience irregular menstrual cycles and menopausal symptoms including hot flashes and vaginal dryness.
- Women may experience painful intercourse as a result of vaginal dryness and irritation. Use K-Y Jelly® or Astroglide®.
- You may have a decreased interest in sex or be too fatigued to engage in sexual activity.
- You can discuss further concerns with your oncologist or nurse.
- Continue routine care with your gynecologist or PCP.

Concerns for Men:

- Some chemotherapy can cause sterility. Please discuss sperm banking with your oncologist prior to receiving treatment.

- Because the sperm may be damaged while receiving chemotherapy, it is not safe to impregnate any female during this time due to possible birth defects.
- You may have a decreased interest in sex or be too fatigued to engage in sexual activity.
- It is recommended that you use a condom.

Be patient with yourself and discuss these issues with your partner.

Hand-Foot Syndrome

Hand-foot syndrome is a condition caused by some types of chemotherapy where the palms of the hands and soles of the feet burn or tingle and become red and sore. In extreme cases it can become very painful. Please notify your oncologist or nurse if you experience continued redness, if your hands and feet become swollen or you have any discomfort. Some things you can do to prevent hand-foot syndrome include:

- Avoid hot baths, showers, or hot tubs 1 day prior to and for 3 days following treatment.
- Avoid excessive rubbing and prolonged pressure to elbows, knees, hands and feet.
- Avoid wearing tight-fitting clothing or shoes, belts, or elastic bands.
- Stay well hydrated.
- Use alcohol-free lotion on hands and feet frequently.

To ease the symptoms and promote healing of hand-foot syndrome:

- Soak hands and feet in very cool water for 10 to 15 minutes three times a day.
- Apply petroleum jelly to the hands and feet while the skin is still moist.
- At night, apply Udderly Smooth® or Bag Balm® and then wear cotton gloves and socks.
- Minimize injury to the hands and feet.

Skin and Nail Changes

- Chemotherapy drugs can affect the skin and nails.
- Skin may become dry and itchy.
- Please call your oncologist or nurse if there is redness, swelling or pain along the IV site after treatment.
- You may be sensitive to sun exposure. The use of sunscreen is highly recommended.
- Certain chemotherapy drugs cause an acne-like rash.
- You may experience facial flushing.

Side Effects of Chemotherapy

- Nails may become brittle, cracked or discolored. In rare, severe cases, the nails may fall off.
- Some things you can do to decrease the side effects on your skin and nails include:
 - Wearing sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or greater and protective clothing when outside.
 - Avoiding lotions that contain perfumes and alcohol, instead using a lanolin-based lotion, such as Eucerin[®], Udder Cream[®], Aveeno[®], or Aquaphor[®].
 - Washing with a mild, moisturizing soap.
 - Avoiding direct sunlight for extended periods of time.
 - Avoiding tanning beds.
 - Avoiding pushing back cuticles or biting fingernails.
 - Avoiding tight-fitting shoes, as they can cause toenail problems.
 - Avoiding artificial nails.
- Please call your oncologist or nurse if you are experiencing pain or signs of infection of the skin or nails.
- Some chemotherapy drugs can cause rashes. In most cases, the rashes are mild, but some can be more severe and must be managed by your oncologist.
- Notify your oncologist at the first sign of a rash.

Radiation Recall

- Chemotherapy may cause the skin in the area that has been irradiated in the past to become red, blister or peel.
- If you are receiving radiation and chemotherapy at the same time, please inform your radiation oncologist and your medical oncologist of your symptoms.

Safe Handling of Chemotherapy Spills in the Home

Prevent Spills

- Anyone working with chemotherapy should wear gloves.
- Check all IV lines.
- Keep sharp objects away from supplies.
- Prevent IV tubing from being pulled or tugged.
- Make sure all connections are tight.

If There is a Spill

- The spill should be cleaned by an adult. Children and pregnant women should not clean a spill.
- Get your “spill kit.” This should have been provided by your home infusion agency.
- Clean up the spill immediately, carefully following the directions in the spill kit.
- If chemotherapy gets onto the skin, wash well with soap and water. If chemotherapy gets into the eye, rinse the eye with running water for five minutes. Call your doctor or nurse to tell them.
- If the spill is on any clothing, remove them. Wash the area with soap and water. Wash contaminated clothes in hot water and detergent two times, separately from regular laundry the first time.
- If a spill occurs on a piece of furniture, after cleaning up the spill, scrub the area with soap and water while wearing gloves.
- Dispose of materials as described in the spill kit.
- Wash hands well with soap and water.
- Call your home infusion agency immediately, and ask them what to do with the materials.

Other Cancer-Related Topics

Lymphedema

Lymphedema is the swelling of the arms or legs related to the obstruction of the circulation of lymph fluid. It is often accompanied by pain and a decreased range of motion. Lymphedema can occur after the removal of lymph nodes during surgery or can occur because of pressure on the lymph vessels.

If you are at risk for lymphedema, you should observe the following precautions:

- Avoid medical procedures such as blood draws, IVs, injections, and blood pressure measurements on the affected arm.
- Avoid heavy lifting and vigorous, repetitive movements of the arm.
- Avoid heat.
- Avoid carrying suitcases, grocery bags, and heavy shoulder bags with the affected arm.
- Use an electric razor to shave under the arm.
- Elevate the arm whenever possible.
- Wearing a compression sleeve may be recommended when traveling on long airplane flights.
- Inspect the arm daily for warmth, redness, swelling or pain.
- Report any rashes, blistering, increased temperature or pain to your oncologist.

Nutrition

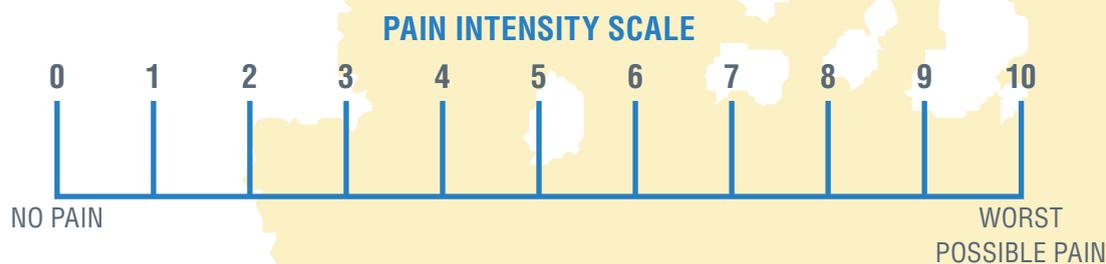
Nutrition can be a concern while undergoing chemotherapy.

- Eat small, frequent meals that are high in protein.
- Nutritional drinks, such as Ensure® and Boost®, are helpful when full meals are not tolerated.
- Be sure to stay well-hydrated by drinking six to eight 8-ounce glasses of water, juice or sports drinks, like Gatorade®, daily.
- Limit beverages with caffeine.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages, especially during the first few days after receiving chemotherapy.
- Check with your oncologist or nurse before taking any herbal supplements or high-dose vitamin therapy.

Pain

Pain can occur due to procedures, treatments, disease, or other reasons. If you are having pain that is not relieved with Tylenol®, a pain medication may be prescribed to you.

- Be sure to take your pain medications as prescribed.
- Take “as needed” pain medications at the first sign of pain.
- Let your oncologist or nurse know if you have pain that is not relieved with medication or if you are having side effects from your pain medication.
- Constipation is a common side effect of pain medication. Take a stool softener, such as Senokot-S® or Miralax, daily, to prevent constipation.
- If the dose of your pain medication is increased, you may need to increase the dose of your stool softener.
- Use the Pain Intensity Scale to rate your pain, and communicate your pain level with your oncologist or nurse.



- Relaxation and guided imagery exercises can be helpful, in addition to pain medication.
- Please call your oncologist if you are having pain that is not relieved with pain medication.

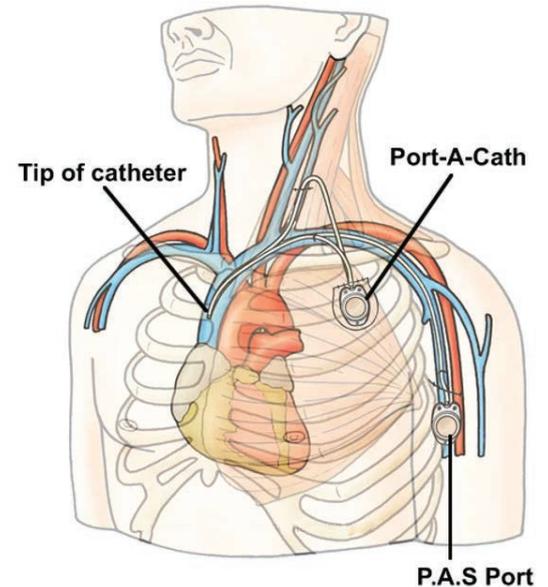
Venous Access Devices

Your cancer therapy plan may include receiving frequent infusions of medication into your veins. Some patients may need to have a venous access device placed. The most common are subcutaneous ports and PICCs.

- Please note that only registered nurses can access and use ports and PICCs. Outpatient labs cannot draw blood from a port or PICC.
- Your oncologist will help you decide if a port or PICC is right for you.
- If you have a port or PICC placed, it is important for you to report any redness, arm swelling or pain at the insertion site to your oncologist or nurse right away.

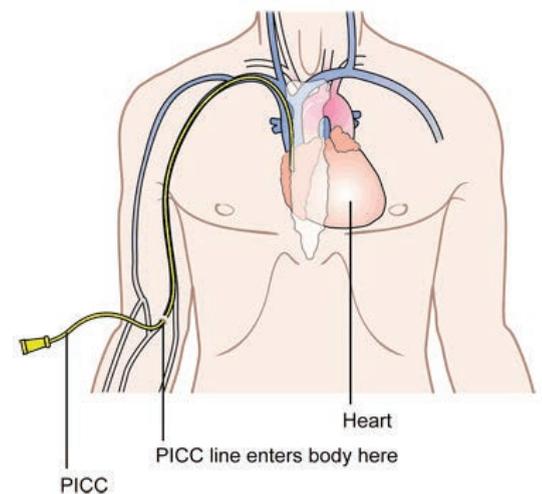
Subcutaneous Ports

- T-Ports are placed by a surgeon or interventional radiologist in the hospital. It is a short, outpatient procedure. The port is placed completely under the skin of the upper chest.
- The port may stay in place for as long as your oncologist determines it to be needed. It will need to be flushed every four weeks when not receiving treatment.
- Once your oncologist determines that the port is no longer necessary, it can be removed in a simple, outpatient procedure.



PICC or Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter

- PICCs are long, intravenous catheters that are placed into the upper arm by a PICC-certified RN in the hospital's outpatient treatment center.
- PICCs require a dressing on the arm and daily care to flush the catheter.
- If you have a PICC inserted, you will receive weekly dressing changes, either at the hospital outpatient treatment center or in your home by a home health nurse.
- You or your care partner will be taught how to perform the daily flushing and care of the PICC.
- Once your oncologist determines that the PICC is no longer necessary, it can be removed by an RN.



Oral Chemotherapy

- Take your medicine exactly as prescribed and labeled on the bottle, in order to gain the benefits of treatment, while avoiding unnecessary side effects. This includes knowing:
 - How much to take
 - How long to take
 - How often to take
 - When to take
- Chemotherapy is often given in cycles, and there may be days during the cycle when you should not take this medication. Check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you are not clear on how to take your medication.
- Do not crush tablets. If you have difficulty swallowing your pills, you may be able to dissolve the medication in liquid prior to taking. Check with your pharmacist before doing so, as some liquids may interfere with the way your medication works.
- If you accidentally take too many pills or someone accidentally takes your medication, contact your doctor, local poison control or emergency services immediately.
- If you miss a dose, do not double up on your medication. Call your doctor or nurse for instructions.
- If you vomit after taking your medication, call your doctor or nurse for instructions. If you are having nausea with your medication, anti-nausea medicine can be prescribed.

Handling

- Oral chemotherapy requires special handling. When taking this medication, it is a good idea to transfer it to a medicine cup, to avoid direct contact with the skin. Some oral chemotherapy medicines can irritate the skin. If you have a caregiver, he or she should wear gloves when handling your medication.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after handling your oral chemotherapy medicine, in case any accidental skin contact occurred.
- If the medicine is dropped on the floor, pick it up with a paper towel for proper disposal, and clean any surfaces it came into contact with.

Storage

- Keep your oral chemotherapy medicine in a safe place, separate from other medications in the home.
- Store your medicine at room temperature, in its original container.
- Keep this medication out of the reach of children or pets.

Safe Disposal

- Chemotherapy medications require special disposal. To dispose of any extra or expired chemotherapy medication, return it to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for proper disposal.
- Do not dispose of unused or wasted chemotherapy medication in the regular trash, pour it down the sink or flush it down the toilet.

Community Resources and Support

A cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming for the whole family. You may feel anxious or have a feeling of being “out of control.” These feelings are normal. Fortunately, there are support services and resources available to help you cope with your fears and emotions, provide you with a sense of empowerment and help you regain control during your cancer journey and beyond.

Please ask to speak to our Integrative Services Department if you need more personalized care (coping, communicating, counseling, support groups, psychosocial needs, transportation, lodging, etc.).

Visit our website at ironwoodcrc.com to view the online and printable calendar of support groups, wellness events and classes.

If you are struggling financially, please be sure to talk to one of our benefits coordinators (financial counselors). They are specially-trained to understand your specific insurance benefits and treatment costs. They are skilled at applying to foundations for grants to help you. We do not want the cost of treatment to be a barrier to your care, so please tell us when you are struggling so we can help.

Glossary of Common Terms

Adjuvant Chemotherapy: Chemotherapy used to kill cancer cells after surgery or radiation.

Alopecia: The lack or loss of hair from areas of the body where hair is usually found. Alopecia can be a side effect of chemotherapy.

Anemia: A decreased number of red blood cells.

Antiemetic: A drug that prevents or controls nausea and vomiting. These drugs are also known as anti-nausea medications.

Blood Cell Count: The number of red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets in a sample of blood. This is also called a complete blood count or CBC.

Bone Marrow: The soft, sponge-like tissue found in the center of most bones. It produces white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets.

Catheter: A flexible tube through which fluids enter or leave the body.

Chemotherapy: Treatment with drugs that kill cancer cells. There are many different chemotherapy drugs.

Constipation: When bowel movements become less frequent, and stools are hard, dry and difficult to pass.

Diarrhea: Frequent bowel movements that may be soft, loose or watery.

Fatigue: A condition of extreme tiredness and inability to function, due to lack of energy.

Hand-Foot Syndrome: A condition caused by some types of chemotherapy, where the palms of the hands and soles of the feet burn or tingle and become red and sore. In extreme cases, it can become very painful.

Healthy Cells: Non-cancerous cells that function the way they should.

Hormones: Chemicals made by glands in the body. Hormones circulate in the blood stream and control the actions of certain cells and organs.

Hot Flashes: Sensation of warmth ranging from mild flushing to overt sweating.

Incontinence: The inability to control bladder or bowel activity.

Infertility: For women, this means that you may not be able to get pregnant. For men, it means that you may not be able to get a woman pregnant.

Injection: Using a syringe and needle to push fluids or drugs into the body, often called a “shot.”

Intravenous (IV): One way that medication can be administered. It involves inserting a needle into a vein and administering medication through the needle.

Glossary of Common Terms

Long-Term Side Effects: Problems from chemotherapy that may not go away after treatment is complete.

Metastatic: A cancer that has spread from its original site to other parts of the body.

Nausea: When you have an upset stomach or queasy feeling, like you are going to vomit.

Neo-Adjuvant Chemotherapy: When chemotherapy is used to shrink a tumor before surgery or radiation.

Neutropenia: An abnormal decrease in the number of neutrophils, a type of white blood cell. Neutropenia puts a person at risk of infection.

Neutrophil: A type of white blood cell.

Platelet: A type of blood cell that prevents bleeding by causing blood clots to form.

Port: An implanted device through which blood may be drawn and drugs may be given.

Pump: A device used to deliver a precise amount of drug at a specific rate.

Radiation Therapy: The use of high-energy radiation to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors.

Recurrent: Cancer that returns after not being detected for a period of time.

Red Blood Cells (RBCs): Cells that carry oxygen to all parts of the body.

Side Effect: A problem that occurs when treatment affects healthy tissues or organs.

Standard Treatment: Treatment that experts agree is appropriate, accepted and widely-used.

Thrombocytopenia: A decrease in the number of platelets in the blood that may result in bruising and excessive bleeding from wounds or in mucous membranes and other tissue.

Tumor Markers: Tumor markers are proteins in the blood that can be monitored in certain types of cancer, to reflect cancer activity. They include CA-125, CEA, CA 19-9, CA 15-3, PSA, beta-HCG and AFP.

White Blood Cells (WBCs): Cells in the blood that help fight infections.



Ironwood Cancer & Research Centers

Outsmarting Cancer One Patient at a Time™

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