Receiving Chemotherapy

Karmanos Cancer Center

Patient/Community Education Department  10-2017
After this class you will know...

- How chemotherapy works
- What to expect during your infusion day appointment
- What are potential side effects
- How to take care of yourself during treatment
- When to call your doctor
Why Chemotherapy?

- What is chemotherapy?
  - Medicines used to treat cancer

- Why is it given?
  - Cure
  - Control
  - Palliate (relieve symptoms)
How Chemotherapy Works

- Traditional chemotherapy stops cells from **growing and dividing** along the “Cell Cycle”.
- If a cell cannot divide it will die.
- Chemotherapy does not always know the difference between the cancer cells and the normal cells.
  - Potential side effects that might occur will be discussed later.
Monoclonal Antibodies

- Targeted therapy
- Attach to antigens on cancer cells
- Stimulates the immune system to attack those cells
- Side effects - Allergic reactions
  - Fever
  - Chills
  - Muscle aches
  - Rash
How is it given?

■ Intravenous – into a vein
■ Oral - as a pill
■ As an injection or shot
■ With direct contact to the cancer such as
  ○ Topical- on the skin
  ○ Intrathecal- into spinal fluid
  ○ Intra-cavity- such as bladder or abdomen
Central Venous Catheters

Central Venous Catheter

Implantable Port

PICC Line
Chemotherapy Treatment Day

What to Expect
The Chemotherapy Process

- Your safety is our top priority
- Receiving chemotherapy takes times
- Your chemotherapy is mixed specifically for you on the day of your treatment
  - After you have seen the doctor and had your blood drawn.
Your Multidisciplinary Team

- Oncologist
- Radiologist
- Pharmacists
- Surgeon
- Social Workers
- Nurses
- Dietitians
- Schedulers
Chemotherapy day

Eat breakfast & take your usual medications
(unless told differently)

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Check in for your first appointment
What Happens on Chemotherapy Day

- Check in
- Lab work drawn
- Clinic visit
- Chemotherapy made
- Chemotherapy given
Infusion Center

○ Patient Station
  ■ Reclining chair and privacy curtain OR
  ■ Private room with a bed

○ One to two guests can stay with you
  ■ For safety - anyone entering the Infusion Center must be 14 years or older

○ Dress comfortably and in layers
  ■ Temperatures may vary
  ■ Warm blankets are available if needed
Infusion Nurse

Your infusion nurse will:

- Start an IV and give you fluids
- Tell you how long your infusion will take
- Give you pre-medications
- Give your chemotherapy
- Monitor you for side effects
- Teach you about your treatment

Tell the Nurse if you feel different in any way, right away!
During the infusion

What can I do during treatment?

- Relax
- Play cards or games
- Read
- Listen to music
- Watch a TV
- Eat or drink
- Make crafts
After your chemotherapy infusion

- For safety you will need someone to drive you home
- Update your *Patient Calendar* at the Schedulers desk
Side Effects

What to Expect
Important to Remember

No two people respond exactly the same to chemotherapy treatment
Why do side effects occur?

- Chemotherapy affects rapid growing cells
  - Both *cancer and normal cells* can be affected

- Normal cells that are often affected include:
  - Hair
  - Mouth and throat
  - Esophagus, stomach and intestines
  - Skin and nails
  - Blood cells
Side Effects

- Your health care team will discuss potential side effects with you
- If you have them, tell your health care team
- They will:
  - Monitor you
  - Help manage them
Prescriptions for side effects

- Medicines to prevent or control side effects may be prescribed
- Get your prescription filled right away
- Take medications as ordered
- Call your health care team if:
  - You can not get your prescription filled
  - Side effects are not controlled
When do side effects occur?

- 1- 3 days after chemotherapy
  - Common symptoms include:
    - Fatigue
    - Nausea and vomiting
    - Diarrhea
    - Constipation
    - Mouth sores
White blood cells

- 7 – 10 days blood cell counts may drop
- White blood cells fight infection
  - Low white blood cell count equal greater risk for infection
  - Protect yourself from infection
    - Wash hands often
    - Stay away from people with colds
  - Injections may be given to increase the white blood cell count
Red blood cells carry oxygen

- Low red blood cells may result in anemia and you may feel very tired
- Get plenty of rest
- Call your doctor right away if you feel dizzy or short of breath.
- Injections or blood transfusions may be given to increase the red blood cells
Platelets

Platelets help form blood clots to stop bleeding

- Decreased platelets increase the risk for bruising and bleeding
- Be careful, try not to cut or injure yourself
- Use an **electric razor** and **soft bristle tooth brushes**
- If you cut yourself, clean cut right away, apply a bandage and pressure for at least 5 minutes
- *If bleeding does not stop, call your doctor*
- Transfusions may be given to increase platelets
Hair Loss

- All chemotherapies do not cause hair loss
- Usually occurs 3 weeks after the 1st treatment
- Hair loss is total body, not just head
  - Plan ahead, buy hats, wigs, scarves, etc to protect your scalp
  - Wear glasses to prevent debris blowing in your eyes
Vision changes

- Some medications can affect your vision
- Let your doctor or nurse know
- Often temporary
- Do not buy new glasses or contacts until treatment is complete
Hearing changes

- Some medications can affect your hearing
- Let your doctor or nurse know
- You may need to be checked by an ENT (Eyes, Ears, Nose and Throat) doctor
Concentration

- Poor memory or difficulty concentrating
  - Often called “chemo fog”
  - Often temporary
  - Write things down
  - Avoid difficult tasks

Let your doctor or nurse know
Other side effects - Peripheral Neuropathy

- Damage to the peripheral nerves caused by certain chemotherapy drugs i.e. Cisplatin, Oxaliplatin, Paclitaxel, Etoposide.

- **Symptoms**: numbness, tingling of hands and feet. Loss of sensation to touch, difficulty picking things up, unusual feelings, unrelieved pain, constipation.

Notify your health care professional if you are experiencing any of the above symptoms.
Safety - Peripheral Neuropathy

Things you can do to minimize effects:
- Do not walk around without footwear
- Avoid Extreme temperature changes
- Use gloves when washing dishes, doing housework, gardening, etc.
- Use potholders when cooking
- Inspect skin for cuts, abrasions, burns
Oxaliplatin Self Care Tips

- Avoid cold temperature and cold objects.
- **Do not** drink cold drinks or use ice cubes
  - **Do not** use ice chips if you have nausea or a sore mouth.
  - Drink through a straw.
- Do not breathe deeply when exposed to cold air.
- Keep air conditioning on low in the car & at home.
- Wear warm clothing in cold weather. Cover mouth and nose.
- Wear gloves (cotton) to touch cold objects.
- Do not take things from the freezer or refrigerator without wearing gloves.
Other Side effects – Hand-foot Syndrome

- Hand-foot Syndrome
  - Drug enters the capillaries of the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet
    - Redness
    - Tenderness
    - Peeling
  - Prevention
    - Reduce friction and heat exposure to hands and feet
    - Moisturize skin gently

Looks like a sunburn
What do I do if side effects occur?

- Tell your health care team
  They will work with you to monitor and manage your side effects

- Refer to suggestions in the *Receiving Chemotherapy at Karmanos*/*insert of your Patient Portfolio*
When to Call Your Doctor
Call your doctor if you have...

**Signs of infection**
- Fever of 100.5 °F or higher
- Shaking chills or sweating
- Flu-like symptoms (muscle aches or pain)
- A new cough or sore throat, or one that is getting worse
- Phlegm or mucous when you cough
- Abnormal vaginal discharge or itching
- A new rash
- Sores or white patches in or around the mouth or anywhere else
- Redness, drainage, swelling, tenderness or pain anywhere
Call your doctor if you have...

- **Nausea** not relieved by medication for more than 24 hours
- **Vomiting** more than 4 times a day
  - Unable to keep fluids or medications down
- **Diarrhea** (loose or liquid stools) for more than 24 hours
- **Constipation** (no bowel movement or hard stools) for 1-3 days
Call your doctor if you have...

- **Problems urinating**
  - Burning or pain
  - Cloudy urine
  - Change in color or odor
  - Decreased amount

- **Problems sleeping**

- **Fatigue (no energy after rest)**

- **Difficulty or pain with swallowing**
Call your doctor immediately

- Dizziness
- Difficulty breathing
- Bleeding from anywhere
  - Blood in your vomit, urine or stool (bowel movement)
- Uncontrolled pain
- Sudden confusion
Patient Portfolio

- Refer to the **Taking Care of Yourself** section in your Patient Portfolio.
  - How to contact your doctor or any other health care team member
  - Keep the business card of those involved in your care in your portfolio

1-800-KARMANOS (800-527-6266)
Taking Care of Yourself

Before, During and After Treatment
Before Treatment

- Tell your health care team about all your medications - including over the counter drugs, vitamins and herbal medicines

- If possible, visit your dentist before your first treatment
48 hours after each treatment

Chemotherapy moves through your body

Broken down & eliminated in urine, stool, body secretions

Removed from body within 48 hours after treatment

If this takes longer, your nurse will let you know
During treatment

- Use disposable paper towels to clean up body fluid waste
- Wash soiled items in hot water
- Double flush the toilet with the lid shut
- Wash hands
- Wear barrier protection
- Avoid contact of body fluids with children or anyone who is pregnant or nursing
Medication

- Update list
- Carry it with you
- Let your doctor know if you start *any* new medication or treatments including:
  - Over the counter medications
  - Vitamins
  - Home remedies
  - Herbal products
Hygiene

- Wash your hands often
  - This is the best way to fight infection
- Shower, bathe or sponge-bathe every day
- Moisturize your skin *gently* & often
Nail Care

Do not
- Cut your cuticles
- Wear false nails

Do
- Keep cuticles moist and pushed back
- Wear nail polish if you like
- Use non-acetone polish removers
- Have your own set of manicure/pedicure supplies
During Treatment

Mouth Care

- Avoid routine dental cleanings
  - Talk with your oncologist before you see your dentist
- Brush your teeth with a **soft bristle toothbrush** at least 2 times a day
- Continue to floss if you already floss
  - If you do not floss, check with your doctor before starting to floss.
  - This may cause bleeding
Mouth Rinses

- To decrease bacteria in mouth
- Rinse mouth **3x day** with a baking soda and salt mixture
  - Do not use alcohol based mouthwash
  - Recipe
    - 1 cup warm water
    - ½ - teaspoon baking soda + ½ teaspoon salt
    - Mix
    - Swish in mouth for 15 – 30 seconds, then spit out
Eating

- Eat nutritiously as possible
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals
- Avoid spicy and greasy foods
- Avoid foods with strong odors
- Avoid extreme hot and cold foods

If needed, *ask for referral to our dietitian*
Drinking Fluids

- Drink 8 - 10 glasses of fluids a day - water, juice or other liquids
  - Keeps you hydrated
  - Improves the way your kidneys work
- Limit caffeine

*Ask your doctor about occasional alcohol use*
Quit Smoking

- Especially important during chemotherapy
  - Decrease effectiveness of many drugs
  - Increases chance of infection
  - Interferes with healing
  - Weakens immune system
- Increases chance of cancer recurring
- The Michigan Tobacco Telephone Quitline can help you quit, ask for a referral or call 1-800-Quit-Now
Stay Active

- If possible continue your usual activities (work, exercise and leisure)
- Regular light exercise (walking) is important
- Avoid strenuous activity

*Check with doctor before traveling*
Limit sun exposure

- Your skin may be more sensitive to sunlight
- Apply a **30 SPF** sunscreen to all exposed skin
  - Reapply every 2 hours when outdoors
- Wear sunglasses, a hat and other protective clothing when outdoors
Rest

- Rest when you need it
  - Take naps
  - Let us know if you are having trouble sleeping
- Ask for help if you need it
  - Friends & family

*Ask for a referral to Karmanos Symptom Management Specialists*
Use birth control

- Do not get pregnant
  - Cancer treatment can harm an unborn baby
- Cancer treatment can cause sterility in men and women
  - Talk with your doctor before starting treatment
  - Sperm banking or freezing eggs is sometimes possible
- Ask questions
Coping

- There is **no one** right way to cope with cancer!
- Many people who receive chemotherapy may have:
  - Feelings of sadness
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Isolation

*If you have these feelings, you are not alone, we are here to help!*
We can help

- Individualized teaching and classes
- Support groups and Peer-to-Peer support
- Social Work Services
- Symptom Management Services
- Referrals for supportive resources; such as hair loss & post-mastectomy needs
- Complementary Therapies including massage therapy, art, music and pet therapy
- Financial and transportation assistance

*Call 1-800-KARMANOS (527-6266) for more information.*
Summary

- Carry your Patient Portfolio
- Update your medication record
- Remember...There are ways to prevent and manage the side effects of chemotherapy.
- Talk with your health care team
- Ask for help!
- Use our resources
Questions

Please ask questions and complete the education evaluation.

Thank you!