

PREVENTING AND MANAGING SIDE EFFECTS

» All treatments can cause side effects. Treatments that are strong enough to kill cancer cells or stop them from growing may damage normal cells, too. Which side effects a person has and how severe they are vary. Be sure to talk with the doctor or nurse about side effects and ways to help prevent or manage them.

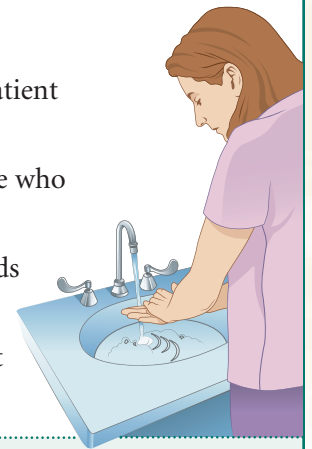
Where to learn more

American Cancer Society
800-ACS-2345
(227-2345)
www.cancer.org

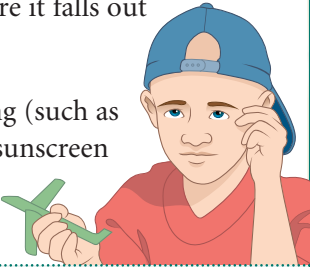
Pediatric Oncology Resource Center
<http://www.acor.org/ped-onc>

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
800-955-4572
www.lls.org

Possible side effect	What happens	What to do may include
Low red blood cell (RBC) count	Some signs of anemia include being very tired, pale, or short of breath.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinking lots of fluids (unless IV fluids are being given) to flush the chemotherapy from the body • Asking the doctor about ways to improve the RBC count
Low white blood cell (WBC) count or low absolute neutrophil count (ANC)	The risk for infection goes up. Signs of infection include fever, muscle aches, headaches, chills, and loss of desire to eat. Antibiotics are often needed to help treat infections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washing hands often • Making sure everyone involved with the patient washes their hands • Staying away from crowds and from people who may have contagious diseases • Following the doctor's instructions on foods to avoid and asking about immunizations • Asking the doctor for ways to treat/prevent low WBC count
Low platelets	Bruising or bleeding occurs more easily as it gets harder for the blood to clot.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using an extra soft toothbrush for brushing teeth • Using an electric razor for shaving • Asking your doctor how to improve a low platelet count
Nausea and vomiting	The sight or smell of food may cause nausea and vomiting. Nausea and vomiting can also be caused by the smell of perfumes or thinking about treatment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking the doctor about medicines that prevent nausea and vomiting • Drinking clear liquids first (like water, broth, ices, or gelatin). Then try thicker liquids like pudding, yogurt, or milkshakes • Avoiding spicy, sweet, or fried foods, and foods with strong smells • Avoiding perfumes



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Hair loss	About 2 weeks after the first cycle of chemotherapy, hair may slowly get thinner or fall out completely. At the end of treatment, the hair begins to grow back.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cutting hair short before it falls out • Using a mild shampoo • Wearing a head covering (such as a scarf, hat, or wig) or sunscreen to protect the scalp from the sun and cold 
Mouth sores	Painful cuts or ulcers form in the mouth or on the tongue and gums. The mouth may feel dry. The gums may look red or swollen. White patches may appear in the mouth sores.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After every meal, using a mouth rinse made of 1 teaspoon baking soda, ½ teaspoon salt, and 4 cups water • Using a flashlight to check for sores and report them to the nurse or doctor • Sucking on a popsicle or ice chips • Asking your doctor about ways to relieve pain from mouth sores
Tumor lysis syndrome (TLS)	Cancer cells are killed off so quickly the body cannot keep up with clearing them out. Chemicals from the dying cells may stay in the bloodstream and the kidneys instead of passing out of the body through the kidneys. This upsets the body's normal chemical balance and can damage the kidneys, heart, and other organs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having IV fluid and medicine before chemotherapy to prevent TLS. Be sure the medicines are taken exactly as directed by the doctor • Telling the doctor about any other medicines the patient is taking. Some medicines can increase the risk for TLS • Asking your doctor about ways to treat/prevent TLS

When to call the doctor

Call the doctor's office if any of the following occur:

- Fever of 100.5°F or more or a very low body temperature (or fill in per your doctor _____)
- Flu-like symptoms (muscle aches, headaches, chills, sweating)
- Redness, swelling, or tenderness around the site of an IV catheter or port
- Bleeding from the nose or mouth, or any bleeding that does not stop
- Tiny red or purple spots or bumps under the skin, which can be a sign of bleeding
- Urine that looks pink or red, or bowel movements that look black or bloody
- Vomiting that lasts for more than 1 day or is so bad that liquids cannot be kept down
- Diarrhea (loose or watery stools) for more than 1 day or a lot of diarrhea for less than 1 day that causes pain and cramping
- Pain in the arms, legs, or joints
- Exposure to people with infections, such as chickenpox, measles, or flu
- Other _____ (fill in as directed by the doctor)