

# Chemotherapy



**You're about to start chemotherapy treatments to fight a cancer. Here's the information you need to know about your treatments and how to prepare for the clinic.**

## What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy (chemo for short) is a form of treatment for cancer. Treatments are different for each person, since they're adapted to each individual case.

Chemo drugs destroy cancer cells. They may also be toxic to your body.

## Does chemo have side effects?

Chemotherapy could cause side effects, such as:

- nausea and vomiting
- small ulcers in the mouth
- diarrhea or constipation

These side effects are generally temporary, and they're treatable. They vary from person to person, just as each patient gets different treatments. Also, each person reacts differently to the treatments.

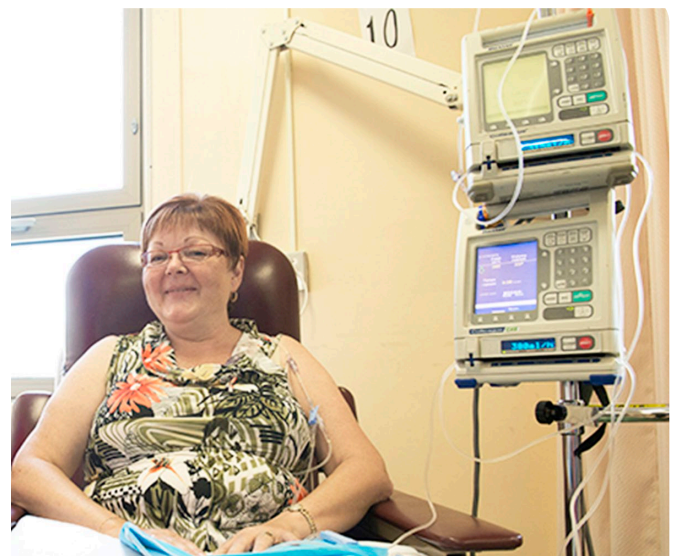


**Ask a member of your care team for specific information sheets on these side effects.**

## Are there different types of chemo?

Chemo comes in different forms:

- pills to swallow
- needles under the skin (subcutaneous)
- needles in the veins (intravenous)
- injections in the bladder (intravesical)
- etc.

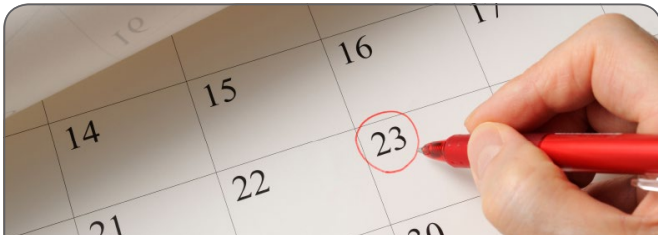


## How much time will each chemo treatment take?

Here again, it's different for each person. Ask your care team so you can plan your schedule.

## What do I need to do BEFORE having a chemo treatment?

Your care team will perform a blood test several days before your treatment. If the results are normal, you'll have your chemo on the planned date. However, if there seems to be a problem, a member of the care team will contact you with further information on what to do next.



### IMPORTANT

- > Keep a close eye on your calendar so you'll be on time for all your appointments.
- > Have a good breakfast on chemo days.

## What should I bring with me to the clinic on the day of my treatment?

- a bottle of water
- a snack or cold lunch
- things to entertain you (something to read, music, laptop, etc.)



## What are the steps in a chemo treatment?

Each chemo treatment involves several stages. The following information will help you to be prepared.

### AT THE HOSPITAL

- > When you arrive, check in at the ticket dispenser with your health insurance card. Take the numbered ticket that the terminal gives you. Then sit in the waiting room.
- > While waiting, take a clipboard, pencil, and symptom assessment sheet from the cubbyholes in the walls. Answer the questions on the sheet. They will help you to describe in detail any side effects you may have had since the last treatment (nausea, weight loss, etc.). The nurse will use this to help you better manage your symptoms and get help if needed.
- > When the number on your ticket appears on one of the screens on the wall, go to the location indicated (e.g. treatment room, chair 1, day care centre, chair 4).

### IN THE TREATMENT ROOM

Go to the nurses' station. One of them will welcome you, show you where to sit and explain the treatment process. Give her the symptom follow-up sheet that you've filled in.



## THE TREATMENT

At your first treatment, you'll meet a pharmacist who will:

- > ask what medications and natural health products you're taking
- > explain your chemo, the major side effects and the medication you need to take at home
- > give you some documentation on your chemo drugs

The nurse will give you your chemo drugs. She'll tell you the name of each drug just before administering it. You may be given several different drugs during each treatment session.

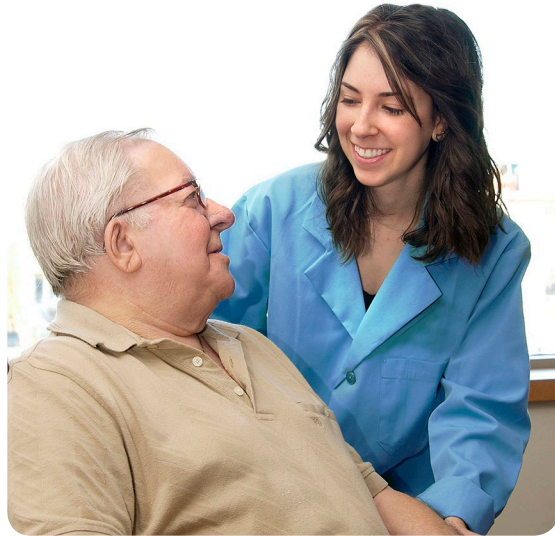
**As a safety measure, the nurse will ask for your name every time she gives you a medication.**

Generally, you won't feel any unpleasant sensations during the treatment.



During chemo treatments, you won't be allowed to:

- > leave the oncology centre
- > use a cell phone in the treatment rooms
- > smoke



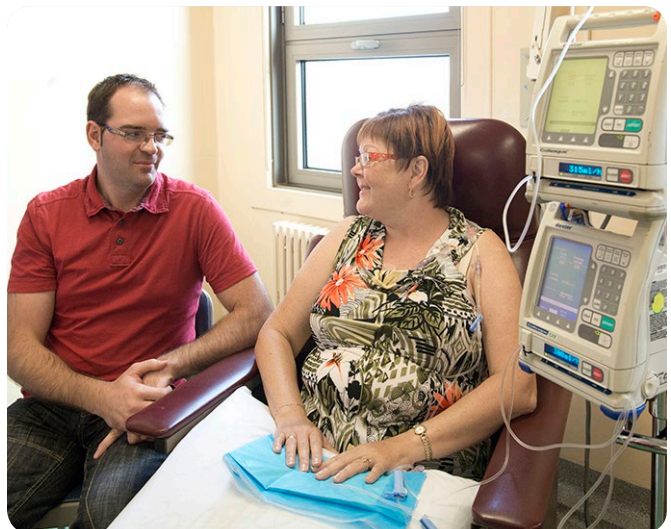
A team of volunteers is around to offer you drinks. Volunteers are also available to discuss.

## BEFORE YOU LEAVE

The nurse will make sure that you have a way to get home safely and you have the date for your next appointment.

## Who can come with me to my treatments?

A family member or friend can keep you company during your treatments. However, for safety reasons, pregnant women and children who are 12 or younger are not allowed in the treatment rooms.



## Where should I go for help or answers to my questions?

If you have questions, feel free to contact any member of your care team.



Write down what you want to know whenever you think of something. That way, you'll remember what to ask when you see a member of the team.



## USEFUL RESOURCES

Canadian Cancer Society:

> **1 888 939-3333**

> **cancer.ca**

National Cancer Institute (U.S.):

> **cancer.gov**

Quebec Cancer Foundation:

> **fqc.qc.ca**

Information → treatments → chemotherapy

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available. Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our web site  
**chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante**



## NOTEPAD



### Questions

Write down any questions you want to ask your care team so you don't forget anything.



*The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.*

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal  
**chumontreal.qc.ca**