

<i>Client:</i>	<i>Date:</i>
<i>Clinician:</i>	

Chemotherapeutic drugs are medicines used to kill cancer cells and to prevent cancer from spreading. These drugs are also called anti-cancer drugs or chemotherapeutic agents. There are more than 80 anti-cancer drugs available. Each type of anti-cancer drug works in a slightly different way. In general, they all kill cancer cells, or interfere with the ability of cancer cells to divide and grow, which can limit the size of cancerous tumors. It can also prevent cancer from spreading to other parts of the body, such as to the bone, brain, liver or lungs.

Risks

Anti-cancer drugs can cause many side effects. Common ones include fatigue, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, mouth sores, hair loss, rashes, and low levels of several types of blood cells. Blood cell problems may increase your risk of infections and bleeding. Other side effects depend on the specific anti-cancer drugs used and include allergic reactions, numbness and tingling in the hands and feet, irritation of the veins injected with the drug, and bleeding from the bladder.

Because anti-cancer drugs can cause birth defects, particularly if used early in pregnancy, tell your doctor if you may be pregnant. Also, some chemotherapy drugs can cause infertility. Adults in their childbearing years should ask their doctors about the impact of chemotherapy on family planning.

When to Call a Professional

Call your doctor if you have any of the following problems during chemotherapy:

- Fever
- Severe headaches
- Swelling of your hands, feet or face
- Chills
- Severe vomiting
- Blood in urine or bowel movements
- Rash
- Trouble breathing
- Any abnormal bleeding or bruising
- Diarrhea
- Any unexplained severe pain

You may need some help adjusting your daily routine to deal with the side effects of chemotherapy. For example, if your anti-cancer treatment increases the effects of sunlight on your skin, you may need to change your schedule of outdoor activities or wear protective clothing and sun-blocking lotions. You may also need to stop taking certain medications, such as aspirin, cough medicine and sleeping pills, because they can interfere with some chemotherapy drugs.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Contact the on-call nurse if you are experiencing any change in your current health condition.
For ALL emergencies requiring IMMEDIATE medical attention, call 911.

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