

# TH

## Chemotherapy Teaching

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# Chemotherapy Regimen

## 1

### Treatment Regimen

Dosing & Schedule

Side Effects

Supportive Care Medications

You are going to start on a chemotherapy treatment plan called THP. THP refers to a combination of medications given in a special order to treat your cancer.

- Paclitaxel (Taxol)
- Trastuzumab (Herceptin)



# Chemotherapy Regimen

Total TH course runs 12 weeks, H to continue for 1 year

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T
	H			H			H			H		

T is given IV once per week for 12 weeks

H is given IV once every 3 weeks (or a smaller dose given weekly)

*H may also be given as a subcutaneous (under the skin) injection over 5-8 minutes.*



# Side Effects of TH

## Common

- Hair loss/thinning, fatigue, low blood counts, muscle/joint aches, numbness/tingling (hands/feet), reflux, heartburn, mouth sores, nausea, nail changes

## Less Common

- Diarrhea, constipation, vomiting, fever, infection, mild infusion reaction

## Rare

- Liver enzyme changes, effect on heart function (an echocardiogram will be done every 3 months), severe allergic reactions, lung inflammation



# Managing Side Effects: Preventing Allergic Reaction

## *In clinic* medications

Your infusion nurse will give you these medications 30-60 minutes before your infusion

- DECADRON (Dexamethasone)
- PEPCID (Famotidine)
- ZYRTEC (Cetirizine) or BENADRYL (Diphenhydramine)



# Managing Side Effects: Nausea and Vomiting

## *As needed* prescriptions

- ZOFRAN (Ondansetron)
  - 1 tablet (8mg) every 8 hours ***as needed*** for nausea
- COMPAZINE (Prochlorperazine)
  - 1 tablet (10mg) every 6 hours ***as needed*** for nausea
- ATIVAN (Lorazepam)
  - 1 tablet (0.5-1mg) every 6 hours ***as needed*** for nausea



# Managing Side Effects: Infection

Important steps to prevent infection:

- Practice hand hygiene: wash hands frequently especially before eating, after use of the bathroom and after contact with high touch surfaces under warm water with soap, towel dry
- Wipe down high touch with moist cleaning wipes
- Stay away from large crowds and gatherings
- Do not go near anyone who is sick
- Do not clean up animal droppings, animal cages, and tanks





# Managing Side Effects: Peripheral Neuropathy

- Peripheral Neuropathy is numbness, tingling, loss of sensation, or weakness in your hands or feet.
- There is no one way to prevent chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy.
- Tell your treatment team if you are experiencing these symptoms. We can prescribe medicine to help you.

## *To help:*

- Protect your hands and feet from extreme heat or cold
- Wear comfortable non-slip shoes
- Don't wear clothing or shoes that are too tight



# Managing Side Effects: Over-the-counter Medications

## Diarrhea

**Imodium  
(Loperamide)**

2 tablets (4 mg) with first loose stool, then 1 tablet (2 mg) with each stool thereafter for diarrhea (do not take more than 16mg/day)

## Constipation

**Sennakot  
(Senna)**

2 tablets (17.2 mg) daily as needed for constipation  
[Other option: Dulcolax (Bisacodyl) 1 tablet (5 mg) daily as needed]

**Colace  
(Docusate)**

1 capsule (100 mg) daily as needed for constipation

**Miralax  
(Polyethylene Glycol)**

1 capful (17 g) mixed with 1 glass of water daily as needed for constipation



# Managing Side Effects: Over-the-counter Medications

## Reflux & Heartburn

<b>Tums (Calcium carbonate)</b>	1 to 4 tablets (500-2000mg) <b>as needed</b> when reflux/heartburn symptoms occur
<b>Pepcid (Famotidine)</b>	1 to 2 tablets (10-20mg) twice daily <b>as needed</b> for reflux/heartburn
<b>Prilosec (Omeprazole)</b>	1 tablet (20mg) once daily for 14 days

## Aches & Pain

<b>Tylenol (Acetaminophen)</b>	2 tablets (1000mg of <i>Extra Strength</i> ) every 8 hours as needed for pain or 2 tablets (650mg of <i>Regular Strength</i> ) every 6 hours as needed for pain. Do not exceed 3000mg/day.
<b>Motrin/Advil (Ibuprofen)</b>	1-3 tablets (200-600mg) every 6 hours with food as needed for pain. Do not exceed 2400mg/day.  [Alternative: Aleve (Naproxen) 1 tablet (200mg) every 8 hours with food as needed for pain. Do not exceed 600mg/day.]



# Fertility

## 2

### Other Information

Sexuality & Fertility

Supportive Care Resources

- Your treatment can affect fertility in women and men.
- Infertility means you cannot become pregnant or make someone pregnant. Infertility related to chemotherapy can be temporary or permanent.
- Before starting treatment, talk with your healthcare team about preserving your fertility and what you can do.
  - Egg harvesting for women and sperm banking for men may be options before starting chemotherapy.



# Sexuality and Birth Control

- It is fine to be sexually active while receiving chemotherapy; however, you should not get pregnant or get someone pregnant during this time.
- Women may notice a change in their menstrual periods during chemotherapy treatment. Bleeding may lessen, become spotty, or stop completely.
- Women can still get pregnant even if their menstrual period changes or stops. Always use a reliable form of birth control.
- Tell your healthcare team right away if you have unprotected sex or if you think that birth control has failed.



# Supportive Care Resources

- Yoga
- Acupuncture / Acupressure
- Massage
- Support groups
- Survivorship programs
- Workshops
- Music therapy

To learn more about all our Supportive Care offerings log onto: [massgeneral.org/cancer/supportive-care](https://www.massgeneral.org/cancer/supportive-care)



# Frequently Asked Questions

## 3

### Frequently Asked Questions

Treatment Day Overview

Exercise & Diet

Supplements & Herbs

- **Q: What will my day look like?**
  - Lab Appointment (~15 mins)
  - Provider Appointment (~30 mins)
  - Pre-medications/Hydration (~30 mins)
  - Infusion (~1.5-4 hours)
  - Times will vary for each patient, but your doctor can help provide an estimate during your first appointment.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Q: Who do I call for cold caps?

- You may be eligible for cold caps, a device to reduce hair loss. Please talk to your care team for more information.

## Q: Can I exercise?

- Yes, exercise is generally safe for cancer patients. Your ability to exercise may depend on the type of cancer and treatments being used. Please talk to your care team to discuss which exercises are appropriate for you.





# Frequently Asked Questions

## Q: Should I take my nausea medications when I'm not nauseous?

- If you are not nauseous, you do not need to take your *as needed* medications

## Q: Can I take herbal supplements and vitamins?

- Many herbal supplements may interact with medications. Please let your team know if you are currently or are planning to take any herbal products.



# Frequently Asked Questions: What Can I Eat?

## **If you feel well:**

Aim to eat a variety of foods high in nutrients including plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and protein every 3-4 hours. These foods help your body rebuild tissues and keep your immune system strong. Stay well hydrated. Most people need between 2-3 liters, or 66-99oz per day, non-caffeinated fluids.

## **High protein food examples:**

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, seafood, lentils, beans, nuts, seeds, & unsweetened yogurts.



# Frequently Asked Questions: What Can I Eat?

## The day of chemo:

- 1) Come in well hydrated.
- 2) Eat a light meal:
  - Yogurt + fruit
  - Nut butter or an egg + toast
  - Oatmeal + nuts, fruit

If you are experiencing side effects including nausea, diarrhea/constipation, taste changes, mouth sores:

- See [massgeneral.org/cancer/nutrition](https://www.massgeneral.org/cancer/nutrition) for tips and recipes.
- Ask your care team to refer you to our Registered Dietitians.



# Your Breast Cancer Team

- Oncologist
- Nurse Practitioner
- Pharmacist
- Oncology Social Worker
- Practice Nurse
- Infusion Nurse



# When to call?

*If experiencing:*

- Fever of 100.4F (38C) or higher
- Chills
- Bleeding/unusual bruising
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing
- Dizziness
- Problems with urination
- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting
- Uncontrolled diarrhea
- Flu-like symptoms
- Extreme fatigue or weakness
- Cough or shortness of breath
- Confusion or agitation
- Rapid heartbeat
- New swelling in arms/legs, face
- Uncontrolled pain or new pain
- COVID-19 or other infectious disease exposures



# Contact Information

- For urgent matters, please call. For all other non-urgent matters, please use the patient portal
- Phone Numbers
  - Boston: 617-726-6500
  - Waltham: 781-487-6100
  - Danvers: 978-882-6060
- Patient Portal:
  - [patientgateway.org](http://patientgateway.org)





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