About Cancer Treatment

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Cancer is treated in many different ways, depending on the type, stage, and location of the cancer. Often, a combination of treatments is used. Some common treatments include:

- Surgery [2]: The removal of cancerous tissue from the body through an operation
- Chemotherapy [3]: The use of drugs to kill cancer cells
- Radiation therapy [4]: The use of high-energy x-rays or other particles to kill cancer cells
- Immunotherapy [5] (also called biologic therapy): Boosts the body's natural defenses to fight cancer. It uses materials made either by the body or in a laboratory to strengthen, target, or restore immune system function.
- Bone marrow and stem cell transplant [6]: A medical (not surgical) procedure in which diseased bone marrow (the red, spongy material inside of large bones) is replaced by healthy bone marrow. Stem cells are specialized cells that help renew the blood and bone marrow.
- Clinical trial [7]: A way to test a new treatment to prove that it is safe, effective, and possibly better than a standard treatment. The treatment you have depends on whether the cancer has spread, your age, and overall health. Find out specific treatment information on your type of cancer [8].

Side effects

Every cancer treatment has a risk of side effects. The side effects you experience may be different from what someone else experiences. Whether you develop side effects depends on the type of treatment, the dose you had, and how well your body copes with the treatment. Your doctors and nurses are there to help you treat the cancer, but treating side effects is an important part of your cancer care. Find out more about talking to the health care team [9] about how you are feeling.

Some common side effects include the following:

- Fatigue [10] is being extremely tired all the time. It is very common in people with cancer. Treating cancer pain and other side effects and exercising regularly can help reduce your fatigue. Talk with your doctor if being tired interferes with your life, and ask about ways to help manage fatigue.
- Pain [11] is a common side effect after surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or from the tumor itself. It is very important to tell your parents and your doctor when you are in pain and the type of pain you are feeling (throbbing, burning, or a dull ache, for example). There are many ways to help treat pain, including medications, physical therapy, or relaxation techniques, but your doctor can't help unless he or she knows your specific symptoms.
- Nausea [12] (the feeling that you are about to throw up) and vomiting (another term for throwing up) can happen after chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Your doctor can prescribe medications before treatment to prevent these symptoms.
- Hair loss [13] can be caused by some types of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Although it's not dangerous, it can feel or look strange at first. To help cope with this change, some teens may want to try different hats, scarves, or wigs.
- Mouth sores [14] may occur after some types of chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Some people find that sucking on popsicles or ice chips before chemotherapy can help. It's also helpful to make sure that you take care of your mouth and teeth clean. Pain-relieving medications (such as creams) may also help.
- Fever can be a sign of infection or neutropenia [15], which is a low number of white blood cells. A fever should be treated right away. Tell your parents and doctor immediately if you have a fever.
- Diarrhea [16] is frequent, watery bowel movements. If over-the-counter medications aren't helping, talk with your doctor about other medications you can take. If you do experience diarrhea, it's important to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and other fluids.
- Constipation [17] is infrequent or difficult bowel movements. It can help to eat more fiber, drink more fluids, or exercise. , Check with your doctor first before taking laxatives or other medications to treat constipation. Discuss this side effect with your doctor to see whether any other medications that may be causing constipation should be changed.

More Information

Coping With Changes to Your Body [18]

Managing Side Effects [19]

Cancer in Teens [20]

Additional Resources

TeensHealth:Chemotherapy [21] andRadiation Therapy [22]

Look Goodâ€¦Feel Better for Teens[23]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Cancer+Surgery
[3] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Chemotherapy
[4] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Radiation+Therapy
[5] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Immunotherapy
[6] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Treatments%2C+Tests%2C+and+Procedures/Understanding+Bone+Marrow+and+Stem+Cell+Transplantation
[7] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Clinical+Trials
[8] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Cancer+Types
[9] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Age-Specific+Information/Cancer+in+Teens/Dealing+With+Cancer/Talking+With+the+Doctors+and+Nurses/Talking+With+the+Doctors+and+Nurses
[10] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Side+Effects/Coping+With+Cancer-Related+Fatigue
[11] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Cancer.Net+Feature+Articles/Side+Effects/Managing+and+Treating+Cancer+Pain%2C+Part+I
[12] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Treating+Cancer/Managing+Side+Effects/Nausea+and+Vomiting
[13] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Treating+Cancer/Managing+Side+Effects/Hair+Loss+or+Alopecia
[14] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Treating+Cancer/Managing+Side+Effects/Mouth+Sores+or+Mucositis
[15] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Treating+Cancer/Managing+Side+Effects/Neutropenia
[16] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Treating+Cancer/Managing+Side+Effects/Diarrhea
[17] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Treating+Cancer/Managing+Side+Effects/Constipation
[18] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Age-Specific+Information/Cancer+in+Teens/Cancer+and+Your+Body/Coping+With+Changes+to+Your+Body
[19] http://www.cancer.net/patient/All+About+Cancer/Treating+Cancer/Managing+Side+Effects
[20] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Age-Specific+Information/Cancer+in+Teens
[21] http://kidshealth.org/teen/diseases_conditions/cancer/chemo.html
[22] http://kidshealth.org/teen/diseases_conditions/cancer/radiation.html
[23] http://lookgoodfeelbetter.org/programs/programs-for-teens