



**Mount Vernon
Cancer Centre**



**East and North Hertfordshire
NHS Trust**

Chemotherapy

an easy-read guide



What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy is a treatment that uses special drugs to kill cancer cells.

Chemotherapy can also affect the normal cells. This means that you will get some side effects, which may make you feel unwell.

Chemotherapy can be used on its own, or with surgery and/or radiotherapy.

How is chemotherapy given?

There are lots of different types of chemotherapy drugs.



Some chemotherapy drugs can be given as a tablet.



Some chemotherapy drugs are given slowly via a drip into a vein.



Some chemotherapy drugs can be given using a special infuser which you can take home with you.



You may need to stay in hospital overnight to have your chemotherapy.

Your doctor will tell you what chemotherapy drugs you will be having and how they will be given to you.

My chemotherapy drugs:

.....
.....
.....

Your doctor will tell you how many treatments you will have.

Before you start your chemotherapy

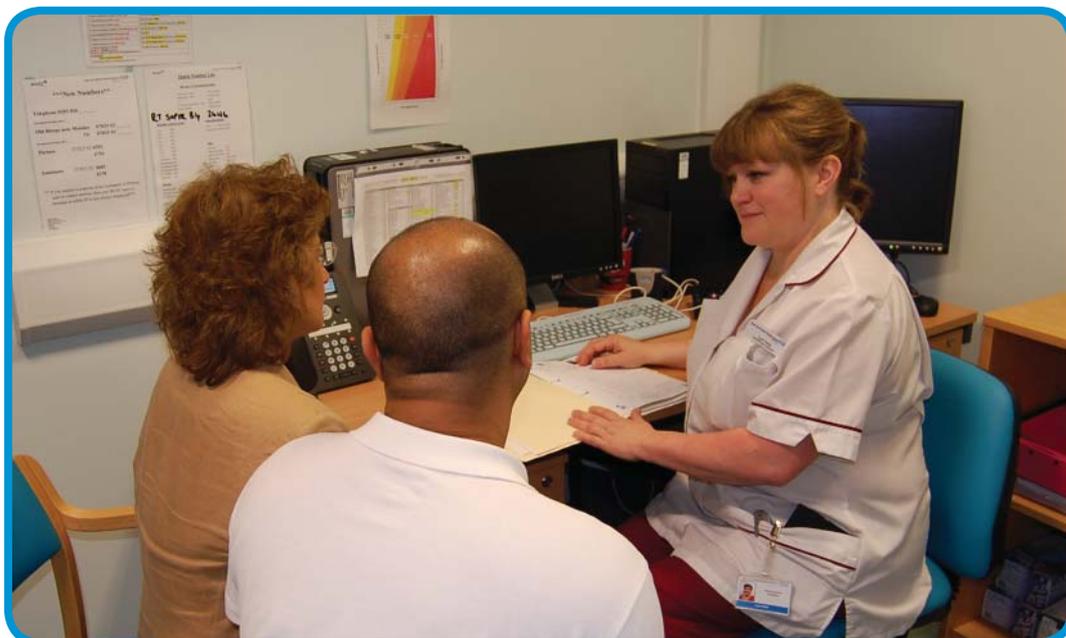
You will need to come to the hospital to see a chemotherapy nurse.

The nurse will tell you about the chemotherapy drugs you will be having and what side effects you may have.

Identification

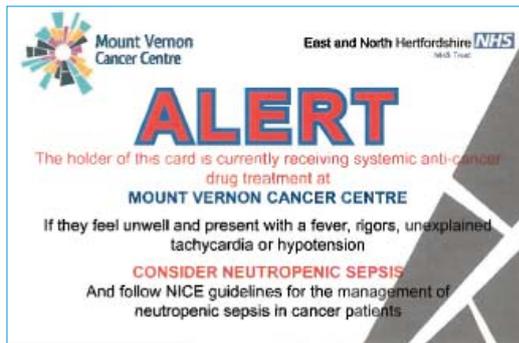
Each time you come to the hospital the staff will ask you for your:

- name
- date of birth
- address





The nurse will tell you when you will start your chemotherapy.



You will be given a special Alert Card for you to carry with you. If you have an appointment with your GP, dentist or other health care professional please show them your card.

Consent

Consent means that you understand why you need to have the treatment and that you are happy to have the treatment the doctor has talked to you about. You will be asked to sign a consent form.

You will be shown where you will be having your treatment.

Where will you have your chemotherapy?

You may have your chemotherapy in:



Chemotherapy Suite
or
John Bush Supportive Care Unit



or Ward10 /11

You will need to have a blood test before you are given your chemotherapy.



Some people also need to have an electrocardiogram (ECG). This shows the doctor how your heart is working.

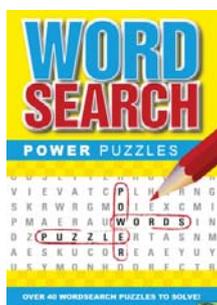
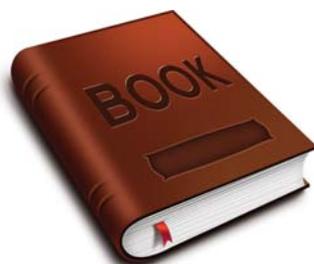
Having your chemotherapy



You can bring someone with you while you are having your chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy should not hurt. If you have any pain or feel uncomfortable please tell the nurse. You will be here for most of the day.

You could bring with you:



a reading book, a puzzle book or an iPad/tablet



After your chemotherapy



The nurse will give you some medicine to take home in case you feel unwell.

When you come for your next chemotherapy, you will have another blood test.

A doctor or nurse will ask you how you are feeling.

Side effects from chemotherapy

Side effects are things that happen because of the drugs. They can make you feel ill.

Your doctor will tell you which side effects you may get.

The doctor will give you some medicines to help with side effects.

Here are some possible side effects:

Tiredness



You may feel tired during your treatment, so rest when you need to.

White blood cells

These cells help you to fight infection.

During your chemotherapy you won't have as many white blood cells.



Try and stay away from people who are poorly.

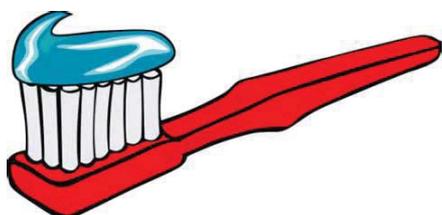
Wash your hands after being outside and before eating.



It is important to take your temperature if you are feeling poorly.

If you have a temperature above 37.5°C you must phone 07825 028855 immediately.

Sore mouth and gums



You may have a sore mouth.

It is important to keep your mouth clean and to brush your teeth morning and evening.

Rinse your mouth after each meal.

Skin



You may find your skin is dry. Using a moisturiser will help. If you have a rash phone the chemotherapy nurses.



The phone number is on your Alert Card.

You may find you get sunburn more easily after your chemotherapy.

Hair

Some chemotherapy can make your hair fall out. If this happens to you your hair should grow back when you have finished all your chemotherapy.



You will be able to choose a wig and try on some headscarfs

Taste and smell changes



You may find your food does not smell and taste as it normally does.

This will get better after you have finished your chemotherapy.

Feeling sick/being sick



Some chemotherapy can make you feel sick or you might be sick.

You will be given some medicine that will help.

Urine

Some chemotherapy can make your urine (wee) turn red or green for a few days.

Constipation

If you find it hard to have a poo please tell your chemotherapy nurses. They will get you some medicine to help.

Diarrhoea



Some people get diarrhoea (thin watery poos). You will be given some medicine to help. If you go more than 4 times in a day, please phone your chemotherapy nurses.

Fertility

Chemotherapy can affect whether you can have a baby. The doctor will tell you about this.



Chemotherapy can affect an unborn baby.

If you are a woman it is important you do not get pregnant while having chemotherapy.

If you are a man it is important you do not get a woman pregnant.

What if I feel unwell?



If you have **any** of these:

- a bad cough
- feel breathless
- redness or swelling in your lower leg
- a temperature above 37.5°C
- feel poorly

Please phone straightaway:

Urgent Medical Advice
24 hour Acute Oncology Service
Mount Vernon Cancer Centre
07825 028855

If you have:

- bad nosebleeds
- red purple spots under the skin or bruises
- soreness in your mouth or throat
- diarrhoea or constipation

Please phone your chemotherapy nurses.
The phone number is on your Alert Card.

What can I do to help myself?

- Drink plenty
- Wash your hands
- Eat a good/balanced diet (little and often)
- Carry on doing your normal daily activities including light exercise
- Keep your teeth and mouth clean
- Try to keep out of the sun
- Keep a thermometer in your home (If your temperature is above 37.5°C phone 07825 028855)



If you have any questions or concerns, phone your chemotherapy nurses.

The phone number is on your Alert Card.

Contacts

Specialist nurse:

Chemotherapy Suite 020 3826 2236
[Mon - Fri, 8am - 5pm]

John Bush Supportive Care Unit: 020 3826 2176
[Mon - Fri, 8am - 8pm]

Ward 10 (mainly for men) 020 3826 2022
[24 hours]

Ward 11 (mainly for women) 020 3826 2040
[24 hours]

Accessibility Coordinators 020 3826 2217
07917 837274

Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre 020 3826 2555

