
Symptom Support During Treatment



LOGAN
HEALTH



Your healthcare team has made a list of items patients have found useful during cancer treatment. You may find it helpful to keep some of these items in your home. Your healthcare team will discuss with you the use of these items to prevent or relieve some symptoms and side effects from treatment. Communication is vital when it comes to symptoms and side effects, so let your healthcare team know about any problems you are having.

Remember to discuss all symptoms with your care team!

Digital thermometer

Every patient getting cancer treatment should have a digital thermometer in their home. Mercury or glass thermometers can be dangerous if they break and may be hard to read. Ear thermometers are often not accurate. One of the first signs of infection is chills, fever, and/or sweats. Take your temperature as soon as possible if you have any of these symptoms. You should call the Symptom Support Clinic Hotline at (406) 752-8672 right away if your temperature is 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher!

Hand soap

The number one way to prevent infection is to wash your hands often. Using hand soap when washing will kill many of the germs that cause infection.

Hand sanitizer

Although the number one way of preventing infection is washing with soap and water, you may not always have access to them. Be sure to carry a no-rinse hand sanitizer for those times when you just can't make it to the sink.

FOOD

Seasoning blends

It is common that foods may not taste the same while getting certain treatments. Patients agree that the food is often bland, "gray," or "black and white, not in color." Adding extra salt does not improve the taste. What has been found to be helpful is adding extra seasonings, such as garlic powder.

Sugar-free hard candies (lemon/peppermints)

Some treatments may cause a metal, cotton, or cardboard taste in the mouth. Patients have agreed that sucking on lemon or peppermint hard candies lessens this feeling. Be certain that the candy is sugar-free. Too much sugar may cause dental problems, such as cavities.

Water bottle

It is recommended that you drink at least a liter and a half (a little over four cups) of fluids each day. A good way to keep track of how much fluid you drink is by filling up a water bottle with your favorite non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic, and non-carbonated fluid. Keep it by your side and take it with you wherever you go. You'll finish the bottle of fluid in no time by taking small, frequent sips.

Below are some options to help you stay hydrated:

Bottled water

It is important to drink plenty of fluid when getting treatment. Fluids help flush out toxins from your body, keep your mucous membranes (cells that line your nose, mouth, throat) moist, and support the growth of healthy cells. Many patients agree that bottled water tastes better!

Noncarbonated sports drink (such as Gatorade®)

Fluids help flush out toxins from your body, keep your mucous membranes (cells that line your nose, mouth, throat) moist, and support the growth of healthy cells. Noncarbonated sports drinks contain essential electrolytes that assist the body with its normal functions.

Oral electrolyte maintenance solution (such as Pedialyte®)

Some cancers and/or cancer treatments may cause diarrhea, which may lead to your body losing important fluid (dehydration) and electrolytes. Sports drinks contain extra sugars, which may lead to increased diarrhea, while oral electrolyte maintenance solutions contain less sugar.

Ice pops (popsicles)

Ice pops are a great source of fluid, especially if you have diarrhea. They may also be helpful if you are unable to eat solid foods because of mouth sores or nausea.

Gelatin

Another great source of fluid is gelatin. Eating gelatin can be counted toward your fluid intake for the day. It may also be helpful if you have mouth sores or nausea, and are unable to eat solid foods.

Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®)

Patients may have flu-like symptoms while getting cancer treatment. With the direction of your healthcare team, you can take Tylenol® Regular Strength (two tablets every four hours) or Tylenol® Extra Strength (two tablets every six hours). If you have a fever, DO NOT take Tylenol unless directed by your healthcare team.

Liquid antacid

Some cancer treatments and medications may cause heartburn or an upset stomach. As per the direction of your healthcare team, Maalox® may lessen heartburn or burning sensation in your throat, chest, and/or stomach.

Loperamide (such as Imodium®)

Some treatments may cause diarrhea, which can lead to loss of fluids and electrolytes. It is important to stop the diarrhea as soon as possible. Having anti-diarrhea medicine in your home will cut out an emergency trip to the drug store. If you do develop diarrhea, call the Symptom Support Clinic Hotline at (406) 752-8672 for instructions.



Toothpaste with baking soda

Baking soda keeps the mouth clean, thereby helping new tissues to grow. Toothpaste with baking soda may promote a very clean mouth and may be less irritating than standard toothpastes.

Baking soda and salt

It is important to keep the mouth clean and moist. Some cancer treatments may cause mouth sores. A good way to prevent these sores is to swish with a baking soda and salt solution in the morning, before bed, and after each meal. Mix 1/4 teaspoon baking soda, 1/8 teaspoon salt, and 1 cup of warm water. Swish and spit. Do not swallow the solution.

Sugar-free chewing gum

Often times, people getting cancer treatment may have a metal, cotton, or cardboard taste in the mouth. Chewing gum may ease this feeling and promote a clean mouth.

Extra-soft toothbrush

You may notice that your gums are very sensitive or sore. Using an extra-soft toothbrush can prevent damage to the gums, such as bleeding, because it is much softer than a standard toothbrush.

Lip moisturizer

Your lips may become dry, cracked, or sore during cancer treatment. Keep your lips moist by often applying a lip moisturizer such as lip balm.

Saline nasal spray

If you notice the inside of your nose (part of your mucous membranes) becoming dry and sore, use a saline nasal spray to keep it moist. This is often common in the winter months. You can also use a humidifier at night while sleeping to increase the humidity.

Baby shampoo

To keep hair from falling out quickly and possibly to lessen hair thinning, shampoo less often (every other day) with a mild shampoo. Baby shampoo is not as harsh as regular shampoos.

Hair conditioner

Some treatments may cause hair loss or hair thinning. Using a conditioner helps keep the strands of hair in their best condition and prevent dry, split ends. Using conditioner is also very helpful when your hair begins to grow back after your cancer treatment is completed.

Vented hair brush

Standard bristle brushes may cause the hair to be “pulled out” from the scalp. A vented hairbrush is less rough on the hair. If possible, brush your hair less often and use your fingers instead. Air-dry your hair when possible, and avoid hair-dryers, curling irons, and rollers.

Satin pillowcase

If your treatment causes hair loss, try sleeping on a satin pillowcase during the period of time when hair begins to fall out. Cotton pillowcases may pull the hair out when you toss and turn during sleep. Satin is a softer fabric that may prevent this. Patients have also found satin pillowcases useful when hair begins to grow back.

Sunblock with SPF 30

It is important to use a sunblock to avoid damage from the sun's harsh rays. Your skin may become very sensitive while getting certain treatments. Get in the habit of applying a sunblock with an SPF of 30 or greater every day. Even during the winter months or going from the house to your car, you are exposed to the sun.

Body-moisturizing lotion (fragrance free)

Some treatments may cause dry, flaky, or cracked skin. Use a moisturizer daily to keep your skin moist. Reapply as often as needed. Be sure to pat skin dry after bathing and do not rub skin dry. Apply lotion all of your body right after drying. If you are getting radiation, your healthcare team may have you use other products to help your skin.

Moisturizing bar soap for sensitive skin and fragrance free

To help prevent dry, flaky, or cracked skin, use a moisturizing bath soap when bathing. Soap for sensitive skin may also be helpful to prevent skin problems, such as rashes.

Remember not to treat yourself without
talking to your healthcare team.

If you are experiencing any symptoms or side effects, call the
Symptom Support Clinic Hotline at (406) 752-8672.

