

Preparing for Cancer Treatment

Chemotherapy, immunotherapy, radiation and surgery are different ways to treat cancer. Depending on what type of treatment you are going to have, it is a good idea to prepare beforehand. By preparing ahead of time, you can make your recovery easier after your treatments.

If you have any questions, ask your care team.

Find your support system

Decide who will be the people you can rely on. You may need help at home, and help getting to and from your treatment. Try to plan on who you can call. Let your care team know the people you choose as your emergency contacts so they can put their names in your medical record.

Talk with your employer

You may or may not be able to keep working during your treatment. Ask your care team how the treatment will affect your work. Ask them how much time off you might need. Once you have a good idea about the timing of your treatment, talk with your employer about a schedule that works for you.

Plan for meals ahead of time

Stock up on healthy meals and snacks. After treatment, you may not feel like cooking. Family and friends can help by cooking or freezing meals ahead of time. You may choose to have a meal delivery service. Stick to high-protein, healthy meals. Avoid junk food when possible. If you would like to speak with a dietitian, ask your care team.

Go to the dentist

If possible, go to the dentist and get a dental cleaning. If you will get chemotherapy, you may get mouth sores. The dentist can give you advice on good mouth hygiene while you are getting treatment. Stay up to date with dental cleanings every 6 months. If you need dental work, talk with your oncology team since you might not be able to have dental work during treatment.

Talk with your physician about vitamin, herbal or dietary supplements

You may not be able to take some supplements with your disease and/or intended treatment. Before starting treatment, let your physician know if you are taking any supplements.

Helpful items to have before therapy

Gather these items to use during your cancer treatment.

- Alcohol-free mouthwash such as Biotene® to relieve mouth dryness
- Skin moisturizers such as Eucerin®, Cetaphil® or Utterly Smooth® to relieve dry skin
- Thermometer to check your temperature
- Soft-bristle toothbrush
- Sunscreen to protect your skin when you are outside
- Gatorade® for hydration
- Ginger-, peppermint-, or lemon-flavored hard candy
- High-protein snacks
- Over-the-counter medications to relieve symptoms
 - Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) for discomfort
 - Loperamide (Imodium®) for diarrhea
 - Senna, polyethylene glycol (MiraLAX®) and magnesium citrate to manage constipation
- Lip balm
- Books, a tablet and/or an e-reader to keep you busy while you get treatment
- Headphones
- Comfortable clothes and socks
 - If you have a port, wear clothes that give the care team easy access to your port such as a button-down shirt. Do not wear a turtleneck shirt on the day of treatment.
 - If you will be getting an IV (into the vein) line, wear a shirt with loose fitting arms.
 - Wear shoes that are easy to take on and off.

If you have any questions, ask your care team.