

化療

本資料主要介紹有關化療的資訊。許多癌症患者的治療方案中都會包含化療。

我們還有以您的語言編寫的有關放療和手術治療的資料頁。

我們希望本資料可解答您的問題。如果您還有其他問題，可以詢問您正在其中接受治療的醫院裡的醫生及護士。

我們列出了麥克米倫提供的其他資訊。這些資訊有的只有英文版本。如果您想跟我們的癌症支援專員談論這些資訊，我們有專為非英語人士安排的口譯員。您也可以談談自己的感受以及您可能有的任何擔憂。

週一至週五上午 9 時至晚上 8 時，您可以免費致電英國麥克米倫癌症援助熱線 (**Macmillan Support Line**) : **0808 808 00 00**。如果您有聽力方面的困難，可使用我們的文本電話 0808 808 0121 或文字中轉。也可以造訪 macmillan.org.uk

包含的有關資訊

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什麼是癌症？

人體的器官和組織由稱為細胞的基本單位組成。癌症是這些細胞的一種疾病。

人體各個部位的細胞可能形狀和功能不同，但大多數都是以相同的方式自我修復和複製。正常情況下，細胞以有序和可控的方式分裂。但是，如果由於某種原因，這個過程變得失控，細胞便會不斷進行分裂，生長成一個被稱為腫瘤的腫塊。

如果是**良性腫瘤**，細胞不會擴散到身體的其他部位，這不稱為癌症。但是，細胞可能會在原部位繼續生長，並且可能會通過壓迫身體的其他部位造成問題。

如果是**惡性腫瘤**，細胞能夠擴散到身體的其他部位。癌症將開始在身體的某個部位生長。這稱為原發癌。如果癌症未進行治療，它可能會擴散。如果癌症擴散並在身體的另一部位生長，它被稱為繼發性或轉移性癌。

什麼是化療？

化療指使用抗癌藥物來破壞癌細胞。藥物在血液中傳輸，因此它們可以到達身體大多數部位中的癌細胞。治療通過破壞細胞分裂發揮作用，使其死亡。健康細胞也會受到破壞，但它們通常會自我修復。

治療過程中，您可能會使用一種或多種藥物。您的醫生會告訴您治療如何發揮作用以及可能何時會對您有幫助。他們還會告訴您在您服用這些藥物時，您可能會有怎樣的感受。

什麼時候使用化療？

化療是癌症治療的一種方式。它可以用於治療或控制癌症。它也可以用於防止癌症復發。其他類型的治療方式包括手術、放療和激素治療。

有些人可能會在手術前先進行化療。這可以使癌症變小，因此所需的手術量更少或者手術更容易。

有些人也可能在手術或放療後進行化療。這是為了幫助降低癌症將來復發的風險。有時候，化療與放療同時進行。

對於有些人，癌症可能已經擴散到身體的其他部位（繼發性或轉移性癌）。化療可以幫助使癌症變小並更好地進行控制。它也可以改善一些癌症的症狀，並幫助使患者活得更久。

給予化療

化療通常分階段進行。每個階段後有一個休息期。一個階段加休息期稱為一個治療週期。幾個週期構成一個療程。您的癌症醫生會與您討論要進行幾個週期。

化療藥物通常靜脈給藥或口服。有時候，給藥方式是皮下注射、肌肉注射、注射到脊柱周圍的流體或者注射入體腔，如膀胱。對於某些皮膚癌，可能是使用化療藥膏。

靜脈化療

將許多藥物注射到靜脈中：

- 插管：在您的手臂或手背的靜脈中插入一個小管。
- 中心線：將細管穿過胸部的皮膚進入靠近心臟的靜脈。
- **PICC**
或外周置入中心靜脈導管：將細管穿刺插入手臂肘部或上部的靜脈中，然後向內穿入，直至管端位於心臟附近的靜脈中。植入式埠，也稱為植入式輸液港

：

將一根很薄、很軟的塑膠管置入靠近心臟的靜脈中。它看起來就像胸部皮膚下的一個凸起塊。

有時候使用輸液泵來在一段時間內給予可測量的、少量的藥物。它們可能要輸液數天，甚至長達一周。泵可能會留在身上更長時間，但每週都會更換。您可以帶著回家並繼續您的日常生活。

口服藥片或膠囊

有些人可能是服用藥片或膠囊。並非所有治療都可以這樣用藥。服用藥片或膠囊的患者可以將藥物帶回家中。務必要記住，它們是化療藥物，仍然可能會有副作用。

瞭解您的治療

在開始任何治療之前，您的醫生或護士會解釋您為什麼需要它以及進行治療的頻率。他們會告訴您在治療之後您可能出現的感受以及任何的副作用。

最好是有既會講您的語言又會講英語的人隨行。如果您需要，可以為您提供口譯員。但是如果口譯員到場，應提前告知醫院。您會被要求簽署一份表格，表明您同意進行化療並已瞭解其可能的副作用。這稱為給予知情同意。

請記住，除非您瞭解為什麼進行治療以及您可能出現的感受，否則不應進行治療。

治療前的化驗

在開始治療之前，您可能需要進行一些化驗。這些化驗幫助醫生確定您的身體條件是否適合進行治療。這通常會包括驗血，可能還有尿檢或心臟檢查。有時候，您可能還需要在治療開始前進行X光拍片或掃描。

在每個治療週期之前，通常要進行驗血以及見醫生或護士。這可能是治療當日或者之前一天或兩天。他們會檢查您的驗血結果，並詢問您自上次治療以來的感受。

在哪裡進行治療？

您將會在化療門診室或病房接受化療。有時候，您也許能夠在家中或者在離您家較近的移動設施內接受化療。您可以與您的醫生或護士商量接受化療的地點，但重要的是必須確保這是您接受化療最安全的地方。根據您的居住地點，您可能需要出行去接受治療。您也許能夠在交通費用方面獲得幫助或者讓人為您安排好交通工具。

治療需要多長時間？

您可以在醫院作為門診病人接受大多數的靜脈注射治療。這可能需要從一個半小時至數小時不等。有些人可能需要短期住院。如果您是使用化療藥片、膠囊或乳膏，則可以在家中用藥。您可能持續數周或數月接受治療。

變更您的治療方案

您的醫生會通過驗血或驗尿來檢查化療對您的身體的影響。醫生還可能會對您進行

檢查以及查看驗血、掃描或X光拍片的結果。有時候，您的治療方案可能需要變更。您的醫生肯定會就此與您商量。

有時候，您的治療可能需要延後，以便給您的身體更多時間進行恢復，然後才能進行下一個週期的化療。治療延後最常見的原因是血液中的白細胞數量太低。

副作用

化療藥物可能會引起讓您感到不適的副作用，因為它們會影響您身體內的一些健康細胞。對健康細胞造成的損害通常只持續很短的時間，並且大多數副作用將會得到緩解。有些副作用可能會持續較長的時間。您的醫生或護士會告訴您有關副作用的情況及其可能持續的時間。

不同的藥物會引起不同的副作用，每個人的反應也有所不同。有些人發生的副作用很少，而有些人卻較多。

我們在此描述最常見的副作用。這些不會影響接受治療的所有人。如果您發現未在此處列出的任何副作用，或者如果您想瞭解更多有關副作用的資訊，請詢問您的醫生或護士。

您的護士會給您一個或多個電話號碼，讓您在白天或夜晚任何時候感到不適或需要建議時致電醫院。將這些號碼存在您的手機上或者記在安全的地方。

感染

化療可能會導致您血液中的白細胞數量減少。這會使您更容易受到感染。白血細胞水準較低也稱為中性粒細胞減少。

如果出現以下情況，請立即通過醫院給您的電話號碼與醫院聯絡：

- 體溫超過 **37.5°C (99.5F)** 或者超過 **38°C (100.4F)**，具體取決於化療小組給出的建議
- 突然感到身體不適，但體溫正常
- 出現感染症狀 — 這可能包括感覺到發抖、喉嚨痛、咳嗽、腹瀉或尿頻。

您的白細胞通常會穩定增多，並在下一次治療之前恢復正常水準。在繼續下一次化療之前，您需要進行驗血。如果血液白細胞仍然偏低，醫生可能將治療延後較短的時間。

貧血

化療可能會導致您血液中的紅細胞數量減少。這些細胞攜帶氧流經全身。如果它們的數量較低，您可能會感到累和氣喘吁吁。如果您覺得是這樣，請告訴您的醫生或護士。如果您嚴重貧血，那麼可能需要通過打點滴輸入額外的血紅細胞（輸血）。

瘀傷和出血

您的治療可能會導致血液中的血小板數量減少。血小板幫助血液凝結的細胞。如果您有任何無法解釋的瘀傷或出血，請告訴您的醫生。這包括流鼻血、牙齦出血以及皮膚上的血斑點或皮疹。有些人可能需要打點滴，輸入額外的血小板。

疲倦

感覺很疲倦是一種常見的副作用。在治療後期，這種情況通常會更嚴重並且在治療結束後可能還會持續一段時間。儘量自我調整並保證充分的休息。可以做一些溫和的運動，如短距離的散步，來保持休息平衡。如果您感覺犯困，切勿駕車或操作機械設備。

噁心或嘔吐

在化療後的最初幾天可能會出現這種情況。您的醫生會開一些抗暈藥來幫助防止或控制不適。必須嚴格按照您的護士或藥劑師的說明服藥。

如果您仍然覺得不適或者想要嘔吐，請儘快聯絡醫院。他們可以給您提供建議並將抗暈藥更換成對您作用效果更好的藥物。

便秘

便秘是指較長時間沒有進行排便。大量補充水分、食用高纖維的食物以及進行溫和的活動往往有助於改善這種情況。您可能需要服用一種稱為輕瀉劑的藥物來作為輔助。您的醫生可以給您開這些藥物，或者您也可以到藥店購買。

腹瀉

腹瀉是指排便很稀並且頻率高於往常。您可能會感到有一點胃痛。如果發生這種情況，請告訴您的醫生。腹瀉通過藥物一般很容易控制。如果出現腹瀉，重要的一點是要大量喝水。

口腔潰瘍

在治療期間，您可能會口乾疼痛或者出現小的潰瘍。大量喝水並用軟毛牙刷輕輕地清潔您的牙齒會有所幫助。

您還應該避免食用刺激口腔的食物，例如大蒜、洋蔥、辣椒和柑橘類果汁。如果您覺得口腔疼痛，請告訴您的醫生或護士。他們會給您建議一些口腔護理方法以及開一些洗口藥和相關藥物來防止或消除口腔感染。

食欲不振

有些人會失去食欲。這可能持續數天或更長的時間。如果您覺得自己飲食不夠，或者如果您體重下降，您可以去見所在醫院的營養師或專科護士。他們會建議您如何改善食欲以及保持健康的體重。

味覺改變

您可能會注意到食物的味道不同了。正常味覺通常會在治療結束後恢復。有些人嘴裡

會有奇怪的金屬味或苦味。吸吮味重的糖或薄荷糖可能會有所幫助。

脫髮

並非所有的化療藥物都會使您脫髮。有些可能只會讓您有一點脫髮。而有些可能會讓您的所有頭髮掉光，這會讓人感到非常沮喪。

脫髮通常是在開始治療兩至三周後開始出現，有時也可能幾天後就開始出現。在治療結束之後，頭髮通常會在幾個月內長回。

使用某些類型化療藥物的一些人也許能夠通過使用冷帽來減少脫髮。這稱為頭皮冷卻。不是每個人都可以進行頭皮冷卻，但您可以詢問您的醫生或護士這對您是否有效。

如果您感到不適或有任何嚴重的副作用，即使沒有在此處提及，也應立即讓您的醫生知曉，這一點非常重要。

其他資訊

血液凝塊的風險

癌症會增加血液凝塊的風險，而化療會進一步增加此風險。血液凝塊會引起多種症狀，例如腿部疼痛、發紅和腫脹以及呼吸困難和胸部疼痛。如果您出現任何這些症狀，請立即與您的醫生聯絡。血液凝塊比較嚴重，但您的醫生可以使用稀釋血液的藥物來應對。您的醫生或護士可以給您提供更多的資訊。

其他藥物

有些藥物，包括您可以在商店或藥店買到的藥物，在您化療期間可能會非常有害。應告知您的醫生您正在服用的任何藥物，包括非處方藥、輔助療法和草藥。

生育能力

治療可能會影響您受孕或讓女方懷孕的能力。如果您擔心這一點，可以在治療開始之前與您的醫生或護士進行溝通。

避孕

您的醫生會建議您在治療期間不要懷孕或讓女方懷孕。這是因為藥物可能會損害胎兒的發育。在化療期間以及此後的數個月內採取避孕措施非常重要。關於這一點，您可以與您的醫生或護士進行溝通。

性生活

如果您在接受化療的前幾天內過性生活，您需要使用安全套。這是為了保護您的伴侶。

哺乳

在化療期間以及此後的數個月內您不應進行哺乳。這是為了防止母乳中含有化療藥物。

醫療和牙科治療

如果您因為癌症以外的原因需要去醫院，務必要告知醫生和護士您正在接受化療。告訴他們您的癌症醫生的姓名，以便他們可以詢問意見。

如果您認為自己需要牙科治療，可以與您的癌症醫生或護士進行溝通。務必要告知您的牙醫您正在接受化療。

旅行

如果您安排了旅行度假計畫，應告知您的醫生和護士，這一點非常重要。因為治療會影響免疫系統，您不能使用某些疫苗，並且您可能會被建議不要乘坐飛機。

相關的麥克米倫資訊

- 化療資料頁
- 控制噁心嘔吐
- 應對疲倦
- 應對脫髮
- 您的感受如何？癌症對情緒的影響
- 患癌症後的生活
- 化療期間的口腔護理
- 瞭解化療

本資料由麥克米倫癌症支援機構的癌症資訊制定團隊撰寫、修訂和編輯。本資料經我們的醫學編輯資深臨床腫瘤學家 T Iveson 博士審核。

特此感謝化療護士顧問 **Michael Flynn** 以及所有審閱了此版本的受癌症影響的人士。

編撰本資料時使用了來自多個可靠來源的資訊，包括：

- 《*British National Formulary*》（英國國家處方集），第 65 版，2013 年，英國醫學協會和英國皇家藥學會。
- 電子醫藥彙編 (eMC)，www.medicines.org.uk（2013 年 8 月訪問）。
- National Chemotherapy Advisory Group（全國化療諮詢小組），2009 年 8 月。英國的化療服務：確保品質和安全（*Chemotherapy Services in England: Ensuring Quality and Safety*）。

本資料頁於 2013 年修訂。下一版將於 2014 年發佈。

我們盡最大努力確保本文所提供資訊的準確性，但是，由於醫療研究現狀不斷變化，所以請勿過度依賴此資訊。具體情況請諮詢您的醫師。麥克米倫不對由於本文資訊或網站所連結的網站上的資訊等第三方資訊的不準確性造成的任何損失或損害承擔任何責任。

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MAC12464



Chemotherapy

This fact sheet is about chemotherapy. Many people with cancer will have chemotherapy as part of their treatment.

We also have fact sheets in your language about radiotherapy and surgery.

We hope this fact sheet answers your questions. If you have any more questions, you can ask your doctor or nurse at the hospital where you are having your treatment.

We've listed other information from Macmillan. Some of this is only in English. If you'd like to talk about this information with our cancer support specialists, we have interpreters for non-English speakers. You can also talk to someone about how you are feeling and about any worries you may have.

You can call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, Monday–Friday, 9am–8pm. If you have problems hearing you can use textphone 0808 808 0121, or Text Relay. Or you can visit macmillan.org.uk

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What is cancer?

The organs and tissues of the body are made up of tiny building blocks called cells. Cancer is a disease of these cells.

Cells in each part of the body may look and work differently but most repair and reproduce themselves in the same way. Normally, cells divide in an orderly and controlled way. But if for some reason this becomes out of control, the cells carry on dividing and grow into a lump called a tumour.

In a **benign tumour**, the cells do not spread to other parts of the body and it is not called cancer. However, the cells may carry on growing at the original site, and may cause a problem by pressing on other parts of the body.

In a **malignant tumour**, the cells are able to spread to other parts of the body. The cancer will begin to grow in one part of the body. This is called primary cancer. If the cancer is not treated it may spread. If it spreads and grows in another part of the body, it is called secondary or metastatic cancer.

What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy uses anti-cancer drugs to destroy cancer cells. The drugs are carried in the blood so they can reach cancer cells in most parts of the body. The treatment works by damaging dividing cells so that they die. Healthy cells will also be damaged, but they will usually repair themselves.

You may have one or more drugs during your treatment. Your doctor will talk to you about how the treatment may work and when it may help you. They will also tell you about how you are likely to feel while you are having the drugs.

When is chemotherapy used?

Chemotherapy is one type of cancer treatment. It can be given to cure or control a cancer. It may also be given to try to prevent cancer from coming back. Other types of treatment include surgery, radiotherapy or hormonal treatment.

Some people may have chemotherapy before they have surgery. This can make the cancer smaller so they need less surgery or the surgery is easier.

Other people may have treatment after surgery or radiotherapy. This is to help reduce the risk of the cancer coming back in the future. Sometimes it is given with radiotherapy.

In some people, the cancer may have spread to other parts of the body (secondary or metastatic cancer). Chemotherapy can help make the cancer smaller and control it better. It may also improve some cancer symptoms and help someone live longer.

Giving chemotherapy

You will usually have your chemotherapy treatment in sessions. Each session is followed by a rest period. The session of treatment and the rest period is called a cycle of treatment. A number of cycles makes up a course of treatment. Your cancer doctor will discuss with you how many cycles you have.

Chemotherapy drugs are usually given into a vein or by mouth. Sometimes they are given by injection under the skin, into the muscle, into the fluid around the spine or into a body cavity such as the bladder. Chemotherapy creams may be used for some skin cancers.

Intravenous chemotherapy

Many drugs are given by injection into a vein:

- **Cannula:** A small tube inserted into a vein in your arm or in the back of your hand.
- **Central line:** A thin tube put in through the skin of the chest into a vein near the heart.
- **PICC or a peripherally inserted central catheter:** A thin tube is passed into a vein in the bend or upper part of the arm and threaded through until the end of the tube lies in a vein near the heart.
- **Implantable port, also called a portacath:** A thin, soft, plastic tube that is put into a vein near your heart. It looks like a bump under the skin on your chest.

Infusion pumps are sometimes used to give a measured, small amount of the drug over a period of time. They may run for a couple of days or up to a week. The pump may stay on longer, but will be changed every week. You can go home with this and carry on with your everyday life.

Oral tablets or capsules

Some people may have tablets or capsules. Not all treatments can be given this way. Most people who have tablets or capsules can take them at home. It is important to remember that they are chemotherapy drugs and can still have side effects.

Understanding your treatment

Before you have any treatment, your doctor or nurse will explain why you need it and how often it will be given. They will tell you how you may feel after you have had the treatment and about any side effects.

It's a good idea to take someone with you who speaks both your language and English. Interpreters may be available if you need one, but try to let the hospital know in advance if you would like one to be there. You will be asked sign a form to show that you agree to the chemotherapy treatment and understand its possible side effects. This is called giving consent.

Remember, no treatment should be given unless you understand why you are having it and how you may feel.

Tests before treatment

You may need some tests before starting your treatment. These help the doctors make sure you're well enough to have your treatment. They will usually include blood tests and maybe urine or heart tests. Sometimes, you may also need to have x-rays or scans before treatment starts.

Before each cycle of treatment, it is normal to have a blood test and to see the doctor or nurse. This may be on the day of your treatment or a day or two before it. They will check your blood results and ask you how you have felt since your last treatment.

Where is treatment given?

You will have treatment in a chemotherapy day unit or ward. Sometimes you may be able to have it at home, or in a mobile unit near your home. You can discuss with your doctor or nurse where you can have treatment but it is important that it is the safest place for you to have it. You may need to travel to get your treatment depending on where you live. You may be able to get help with the cost of travel or have transport arranged for you.

How long does treatment take?

You can have most intravenous treatments as a day patient at the hospital. This may take from half an hour to a few hours. Some people may need to stay in hospital for a short time. If you're having chemotherapy tablets, capsules or creams, you can take these at home. You may have treatment for a few weeks or for a number of months.

Changes to your treatment plan

Your doctors will use blood tests or urine tests to check the effect of the chemotherapy on your body. The doctor may also examine you and look at the results of blood tests, scans or x-rays. Sometimes your treatment may need to be changed. Your doctor will always discuss this with you.

Sometimes your treatment may need to be delayed to give your body more time to recover before the next cycle of treatment is given. The most common reason to delay treatment is because the number of white cells in the blood is too low.

Side effects

Chemotherapy drugs can cause side effects that make you feel unwell, as they affect some of the healthy cells in your body. Damage to the healthy cells usually only lasts a short time and most side effects will improve. Some side-effects can last longer. Your doctor or nurse will tell you about them and how long they may last.

Different drugs cause different side effects and each person will react in a different way. Some people have very few side effects while others may have more.

We describe the most common side effects here. These won't affect all people who have treatment. If you notice any effects which aren't listed here, or if you want to know more about side effects, ask your doctor or nurse.

Your nurse will give you a telephone number or numbers to call the hospital if you feel unwell or need advice any time of day or night. Save these numbers in your mobile phone or keep them somewhere safe.

Infection

Chemotherapy can reduce the number of white cells in your blood. This will make you more likely to get an infection. When they are low it's called neutropenia.

Contact the hospital straight away on the contact number you've been given if:

- your temperature goes over 37.5°C (99.5°F) or over 38°C (100.4°F), depending on the advice given by your chemotherapy team
- you suddenly feel unwell, even with a normal temperature
- you have symptoms of an infection – this can include feeling shaky, a sore throat, a cough, diarrhoea or needing to pass urine a lot.

Your white cells usually increase steadily and return to normal before your next treatment. You will have a blood test before having more chemotherapy. If your blood cells are still low, your doctor may delay your treatment for a short time.

Anaemia

Chemotherapy can reduce the number of red cells in your blood. These cells carry oxygen around the body. If they are low you may be tired and breathless. Tell your doctor or nurse if you feel like this. If you are very anaemic, you may need a drip to give you extra red cells (blood transfusion).

Bruising and bleeding

Your treatment can reduce the number of platelets in your blood. Platelets are cells that help the blood to clot. Tell your doctor if you have any bruising or bleeding you can't explain. This includes nosebleeds, bleeding gums, blood spots or rashes on the skin. Some people may need a drip to give them extra platelets.

Tiredness

Feeling very tired is a common side effect. It's often worse towards the end of treatment and can last for a time after your treatment finishes. Try to pace yourself and get as much rest as you need. It helps to balance this with some gentle exercise, such as short walks. If you feel sleepy, don't drive or operate machinery.

Feeling sick or being sick

This may happen in the first few days after chemotherapy. Your doctor will prescribe anti-sickness drugs to help prevent or control sickness. Take them exactly as your nurse or pharmacist explains to you.

If you still feel sick or are being sick, contact the hospital as soon as possible. They can give you advice and change the anti-sickness drug to one that works better for you.

Constipation

Constipation is when you have not opened your bowels for a while. This can usually be helped by drinking lots of fluids, eating more high-fibre foods and taking gentle exercise. You may need to take a medicine called a laxative to help. Your doctor can prescribe these for you or you can buy them at a chemist.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea is when you have loose bowel movements more often than usual. You may get some stomach pain. Tell your doctor if this happens. It can usually be easily controlled with medicine. It's important to drink plenty of fluids if you have diarrhoea.

Sore mouth

Your mouth may become sore or dry or you may notice small ulcers during treatment. It can help to drink lots of fluids and to clean your teeth gently with a soft toothbrush.

You should also avoid foods which irritate the mouth, such as garlic, onions, chillies and citrus fruit juices. Tell your doctor or nurse if your mouth feels sore. They can advise you on mouth care and give you mouthwashes and medicine to prevent or clear mouth infections.

Loss of appetite

Some people lose their appetite. This may last a few days or longer. If you think you are not eating enough, or if you are losing weight, you can ask to see a dietitian or specialist nurse at your hospital. They can advise you on improving your appetite and keeping to a healthy weight.

Taste changes

You may notice that food tastes different. Normal taste usually comes back after treatment finishes. Some people get a strange metal or bitter taste in their mouth. Sucking on strongly flavoured sweets or mints may help.

Hair loss

Not all chemotherapy drugs make your hair fall out. Some may make only a little fall out. Others can make all of your hair fall out and this can be very upsetting.

If your hair falls out, it usually starts two–three weeks after starting treatment, although sometimes it can start within a few days. It will usually grow back over a few months once you've finished your treatment.

Some people having certain types of chemotherapy may be able to reduce hair loss by using a cold cap. This is called scalp cooling. Not everyone can have scalp cooling, but you can ask your doctor or nurse whether it would be useful for you.

It's important to let your doctor know straight away if you feel unwell or have any severe side effects, even if they're not mentioned here

Additional information

Blood clot risk

Cancer increases the chance of a blood clot and chemotherapy can add to this. A clot can cause symptoms such as pain, redness and swelling in a leg, breathlessness and chest pain. Contact your doctor straight away if you have any of these symptoms. A blood clot is serious but your doctor can treat it with drugs that thin the blood. Your doctor or nurse can give you more information.

Other medicines

Some medicines, including ones you can buy in a shop or chemist, can be harmful when you are having chemotherapy. Tell your doctor about any medicines you are taking, including over-the-counter drugs, complementary therapies and herbal drugs.

Fertility

Your treatment may affect being able to get pregnant or father a child. If you are worried about this, you can talk to your doctor or nurse before treatment starts.

Contraception

Your doctor will advise you not to become pregnant or to father a child during treatment. This is because the drugs may harm a developing baby. It's important to use contraception during and for a few months after chemotherapy. You can talk to your doctor or nurse about this

Sex

If you have sex within the first couple of days of having chemotherapy you need to use a condom. This is to protect your partner.

Breastfeeding

You should not to breastfeed during treatment and for a few months after. This is in case there is chemotherapy in the breast milk.

Medical and dental treatment

If you need to go into hospital for any reason other than cancer, always tell the doctors and nurses that you are having chemotherapy. Tell them the name of your cancer doctor so they can ask for advice.

Talk to your cancer doctor or nurse if you think you need dental treatment. Always tell your dentist you are having chemotherapy.

Travel

If you have a holiday planned it's very important to talk to your doctor or nurse about your plans. Because the treatment affects the immune system, you cannot have some vaccines and you may be advised not to fly.

Related Macmillan information

- Chemotherapy fact sheets
- Controlling nausea and vomiting
- Coping with fatigue
- Coping with hair loss
- How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer
- Living with and after cancer
- Mouth care during chemotherapy
- Understanding chemotherapy

For copies of this information call free on **0808 808 00 00** or visit **macmillan.org.uk**

This fact sheet has been written, revised and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been approved by our medical editor, Dr Tim Iveson, Consultant Clinical Oncologist.

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This fact sheet has been compiled using information from a number of reliable sources, including:

- *British National Formulary*. 65th edition. 2013. British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain.
- electronic Medicines Compendium (eMC). www.medicines.org.uk (accessed August 2013).
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