

# PATIENT TREATMENT GUIDE



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Thank you for placing your trust in Arizona Blood and Cancer Specialists.  
We are here to support you every step of the way.

This guide contains valuable information that will assist you and your caregivers throughout your journey. We encourage you to review it and keep as a reference during treatment. If you have any questions we're here, just ask.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Physician(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Diagnosis: \_\_\_\_\_

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Treatment Medications: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please note that the information contained herein is for informational purposes ONLY and is not intended in any way to substitute or replace discussions about your treatment between you and your health care provider.



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## Types of Treatment

These treatments can be used as a single type of treatment, or your oncologist may use them together in a combined approach to treat your cancer.

### **Chemotherapy**

Chemotherapy can be a single drug, or a combination of drugs used to slow or stop the growth of cancer cells throughout the body by preventing their ability to divide and reproduce. It can be used alone to treat cancer, and in some cases, it is used in combination with surgery or radiation treatments. The schedule for chemotherapy is referred to as a cycle. A cycle will include treatment days and rest days.

### **Immunotherapy**

Immunotherapy uses the body's own immune system to fight certain types of cancer. Immunotherapies activate a stronger than normal immune response and train the body to identify and destroy cancer cells. This type of treatment may be used by itself or with other therapies.

### **Targeted Therapy**

Targeted therapy blocks the growth of cancer cells by interfering with specific molecules needed for tumor growth. Cancer cells typically have changes in their genes that make them different from normal cells. Tests will determine if you have the biomarker that will likely respond to a given targeted therapy. Targeted therapies may be combined with chemotherapy or immunotherapy.

### **Surgery**

Surgery removes a tumor and surrounding tissue that might contain cancer cells. With certain cancers, the chemotherapy may be given as a treatment prior to surgery, in an effort to shrink a tumor's mass. This is known as neo-adjuvant chemotherapy. When it is given after surgery, to kill any remaining cancer cells in the body, it is called adjuvant chemotherapy. It can be used to delay the progression or prevent the recurrence of cancer.

### **Radiation Therapy**

Radiation therapy uses different types of high energy radiation to shrink or kill cancer cells. It can be delivered by a machine from outside the body or by radioactive materials that are placed inside the body. Radiation therapy may be used alone or in combination with chemotherapy, immunotherapy, and/or surgery.

### **Clinical Trials**

Clinical trials are voluntary research studies designed to answer specific questions about treatment interventions. They are the primary way researchers generate information on safety and efficacy to improve treatment effectiveness and delivery methods. Arizona Blood and Cancer Specialists partners with OneOncology Research Network and with Arizona Clinical Research to offer clinical trials in many of our clinics.



## Treatment Delivery Methods

### Intravenous (IV) directly into the vein:

- **Peripheral Lines** use the veins in arms or hands. It is a temporary thin, bendable tube that slides into your vein with the assistance of a needle.
- **Port-a-Cath (Port)** is a small disc-like device implanted under the skin by a surgeon or radiologist. Medication is administered intermittently by placing a small needle through the skin, into the reservoir. When the needle is withdrawn the reservoir cover reseals itself. Hundreds of needle sticks can be made over the lifetime of a port, ranging from months to years. If you have a port implanted, bring the device ID card with you for your treatments.
- **PICC (Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter)** Lines are inserted through a sheath into a vein under ultrasound guidance, usually in the arm. One PICC may have a single, double or triple lumen each with its own external connector. This allows medication administration and blood draws without a needle stick. PICC lines can stay in place for weeks to months.
- **Hickman or Groshong catheter:** A Hickman is a small, soft tube that is surgically placed into a large vein in your neck or chest. Much like PICCs and Ports, they may remain in place for an extended period and can be used for medication administration and blood draws.

### Oral

Medication that is taken by mouth in the form of pills, capsules, tablets, or liquids.

### Injection/Shot

Administration through a needle and syringe underneath the skin (subcutaneous) or into a muscle (intramuscular).





## Preparing for Treatment

It is important to learn about your diagnosis and care plan before treatment begins. There are multiple educational resources available in our clinics and on the Arizona Blood and Cancer Specialists website ([ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com](http://ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com)). While reading through this information, please keep a list of questions to ask your health care team.



## Patient Education: Cancer Staging

Clinical staging is based on the results of detailed physical examinations, imaging scans, and biopsies.

Pathological staging is based on surgical tumor findings as well as clinical findings. It gives the most amount of information to make a prognosis but is not always an option depending on the location of the tumor and/or the health of the individual.

Staging provides important information that can help your oncologist determine the best treatment plans for you. When doctors use the term, “restaging” it can be misleading. Once a stage is determined, it never changes. The cancer may grow or shrink, spread to other organs or come back after treatment, but it will still be referred to as it was originally staged. This information is still highly valuable in determining whether the cancer has gotten better, worse or returned, and guides treatment strategies such as when to start or discontinue therapy.

## Patient Education: Before Treatment Begins

Your provider will explain the treatment goals, medications, risks, and benefits so you know what to expect—this is known as the informed consent process. It is important that you understand your treatment plan and are provided time to ask any questions you may have.

A member of your healthcare team will provide in-depth education about your diagnosis and treatment plan before treatment begins.

- **Fertility and Pregnancy Precautions:** Your provider will discuss any recommendations related to pregnancy or birth control. Talk with your provider about the need for fertility preservation options before starting treatment.
- **Infection Precautions:** Handwashing is the best way to avoid catching an infection. Wash your hands after using the bathroom, blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing, before eating, and before touching your eyes, nose or mouth. If running water and soap are not available, use hand sanitizer. Encourage visitors to wash their hands also. You are your own best advocate by encouraging visitors to stay away if they are not feeling well.
- **Using a Thermometer:** Many treatments can increase the risk of infection so keep a thermometer close by. Check your temperature daily during treatment and any time you are not feeling well. For temperature of 100.4 or higher, call your clinic immediately.
- **Distress and Depression Screening:** Patients are screened regularly for distress. We have palliative care services within Arizona Blood and Cancer Specialists to help you manage difficult emotions, family stressors, practical concerns, and physical problems that may come up during the course of your treatment.
- **Tobacco Use:** It is never too late to quit using tobacco products. Talk with a member of your health care team if you would like more information about quitting.

## Safety at Home: Fall Prevention

Ways to help reduce your risk of falling includes making sure you have your sight and hearing tested regularly, staying physically active, limiting alcohol consumption, and wearing proper fitting shoes. Remove throw rugs or other tripping hazards in and around your home. Keep your home well lit, using night lights in the bathroom, bedroom, and hallway. Keep a flash light handy in case of power outage. Install grab bars in the shower. Using an assistive device such as a cane or walker can help you steady yourself as you walk.



# Patient Education: Care Before, During & After Treatment

## Vision Care

For cancer patients, it's important to be up-to-date on their eye exams.

During treatment, patients may need to be prepared:

- to wear eyeglasses instead of contacts.
- to wear sunglasses, potentially wrap-arounds to decrease light sensitivity.
- to use artificial tears.
- to arrange transportation if unable to drive.
- to reduce screen time.
- to report effects on vision and the eye to their oncology provider.

After treatment it is recommended that you resume contact with your eye doctor.

## Hearing Care

Some types of cancer treatments can damage a person's hearing. Your oncologist may refer you to an otologist who can diagnose and treat ear problems or an audiologist who can test for hearing problems. Your oncologist may recommend having your hearing tested at least once after treatment ends. Depending on the type of cancer treatment you received testing may be more often.

## Dental Care

Your oncologist may recommend that you undergo a dental evaluation prior to treatment. Cancer treatments can weaken your immune system, increasing your risk for an infection, which could delay your cancer treatment. Some types of radiation treatments can damage salivary glands causing an extremely dry mouth. Having a dry mouth can also increase your risk of infection or tooth decay.

## Cardiology Care

If your heart is healthy at the beginning of cancer therapy, it is less likely that cardiac complications will occur during your cancer treatment. If a person has cardiac complications in the middle of treatment it may delay or stop treatment, and limit additional treatment options. Your oncologist will determine if you should have a cardiac evaluation prior to treatment.

## Pulmonology Care

Your oncologist may refer you to a pulmonologist prior to having your cancer treatment. A pulmonologist can measure how much oxygen your body is getting and test lung function to make sure you are healthy enough to undergo treatment. They can also help with breathing problems that may arise during treatment.

## Understanding Your Lab Values

Cancer treatment affects the production of blood cells in the body, which can lead to low blood cell counts. Blood counts are the lowest 7–14 days after you receive treatment. This is a common side effect and is only temporary. Your counts (lab values) will be checked regularly throughout your treatment. Your oncologist may order additional lab or imaging tests to monitor side effects and effectiveness of your treatment.

### WHITE BLOOD CELLS

White blood cells help fight infection in the body. If white blood cells or neutrophils are low, the risk of getting an infection is higher. This is called neutropenia.

#### Signs of an infection can include:

- Fever: temperature of 100.4° or higher
- Chills
- Redness or drainage from a wound
- Sinus congestion or drainage
- Burning with urination or cloudy urine

#### If your white blood cell count is low:

- Wash hands frequently.
- Avoid people who are sick and large crowds (wear a mask).
- Check with the provider before having dental work done.
- Cook foods thoroughly.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before eating.
- Use a soft bristle toothbrush after meals and at bedtime.
- Report temperatures of 100.4° or higher.
- Avoid the use of suppositories.

### RED BLOOD CELLS

Red blood cells carry oxygen to all parts of the body. When the body's red blood cell count is low, the heart must work harder to pump oxygenated blood throughout the body. This is called anemia.

#### Signs of low red blood cell counts include:

- Dizziness
- Feeling cold
- Shortness of breath
- Decreased energy
- Faster heart beat
- Pale skin
- Fatigue

#### If your red blood cell counts are low:

- Eat a healthy diet and drink plenty of fluids.
- Pace activities to conserve energy.
- Get 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Take a walk or do some type of low-impact exercise every day.

## Platelets

Platelets help the blood clot when a person is injured or cut. If platelets become low, it is easier to bleed and bruise. This is called thrombocytopenia. Call the clinic if you experience any of the signs below.

### Signs of low platelet count include:

- Nosebleed
- More bruises than usual
- Bloody urine or stool
- Small flat, red dots on skin
- Bleeding for longer than normal
- Bleeding gums

### If platelet counts are low:

- Use a soft bristle toothbrush.
- Avoid dental floss or toothpicks.
- Use an electric razor for shaving.
- Check urine and bowel movements for blood.
- Do not use enemas, suppositories, or tampons, unless directed by your provider.



### NORMAL LAB VALUES

White Blood Cells (WBC)	4.6–10.9	
Neutrophils	2.0–7.8	
Red Blood Cells	Male: 4.69–6.13	Female: 4.04–5.48
Hemoglobin	Male: 14.1–18.1	Female: 12.2–15.2
Hematocrit	Male 43.5–53.7	Female: 37.7–47.9
Platelets	142–144	





## **Safety Precautions at Home During Chemotherapy**

Chemotherapy can be present in urine, vomit, blood, stool, sweat, mucous, tears, and sexual fluids. We have included general guidelines for special precautions that should be taken for the first 48-hours after treatment to protect you and your family.

# Safety Precautions at Home During Chemotherapy

## Body Waste

- If body fluids or waste get onto the skin, wash with soap and water immediately.
- When using the toilet, close the lid before flushing. Always flush the toilet twice. It is okay for family members to use the same toilet as you.
- If you do not have bladder or bowel control, use a plastic backed diaper, pad, or sheet to soak up any waste. Double bag used items and place in regular trash.
- You and/or your caregivers should wear gloves when handling your bodily fluids. Wash bedpans, urinals, and basins with soap and water after each use.
- Hands should be washed each time gloves are removed. Gloves should not be washed or reused.
- If linen or clothing becomes soiled, keep them separate from other laundry and wash as soon as possible. Use hot water and run through the rinse cycle twice. If items cannot be washed right away, double bag and set aside until you are able to wash them.
- Pregnant or breast-feeding women should avoid handling your body waste.

## Sexual Precautions

- Discuss family planning with your provider before you begin treatment.
- Avoid sexual activity for at least 48 hours after each treatment. This will protect your partner from being exposed to chemotherapy through your body fluids.
- Avoid pregnancy during treatment and for six months after your treatment is complete.
- Use two forms of birth control throughout treatment. Condoms are recommended as a barrier during treatment.

## Contact with Others

- It is safe to hug, kiss, and interact with others during treatment.
- Encourage family and friends to wash their hands frequently when visiting.
- Keep your distance from people who are sick and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer frequently.

## Oral Chemotherapy

If you are prescribed an oral chemotherapy, you will receive specific instructions on the safe storage, handling and disposal of the chemotherapy. Most of these medications should be stored at room temperature, away from heat, sunlight and moisture. Some may need to be refrigerated or require special storage or handling. It is recommended that you store this medication away from medication used by other family members. Please ask your care team or pharmacist if you have any questions about how to use, store or handle the medication prescribed to you in our office.

## Understanding the Drug Label

Many pharmacies will provide large print labels and instructions for people with impaired or low vision, that typically can be requested in English or Spanish. In addition, some pharmacies also offer talking prescription labels, as well as labels in Braille. You may also want to ask your pharmacist if your medication is available in an easy to open package or container, understanding that if you choose this option, the prescription must be stored properly, away from a child's reach and sight.





## **In-Office Medication Dispensing**

As a convenience to our patients, Arizona Blood and Cancer Specialists can dispense many medications in our office. This helps to ensure our patients receive their medications as quickly as possible so they can follow their prescribed treatment plan.

## In-Office Medication Dispensing

### **Personalized care with in-office medication dispensing.**

The in-office dispensing team has direct access to a patient's medical records which allows for better coordination of care. This also allows for patients to receive personalized education regarding the medications they have been prescribed, such as the schedule of when certain medications should be taken in relation to another medication or treatment they are receiving.

### **What do you need to do?**

When you arrive for your appointment you will need to provide your prescription benefit card. Any time your coverage changes, it is important to provide us with updated information and a copy of your new card.

### **Does ABCS accept my prescription benefits coverage?**

We can process prescriptions covered by Medicare Part D. In addition, we are able to fill prescriptions under most major prescription benefits plans. If a prescription is written for long-term use, it may be advantageous to have it filled using a mail order pharmacy. Our pharmacy team who is highly experienced in assisting patients with their prescription needs can help patients determine the best, most cost-effective option.

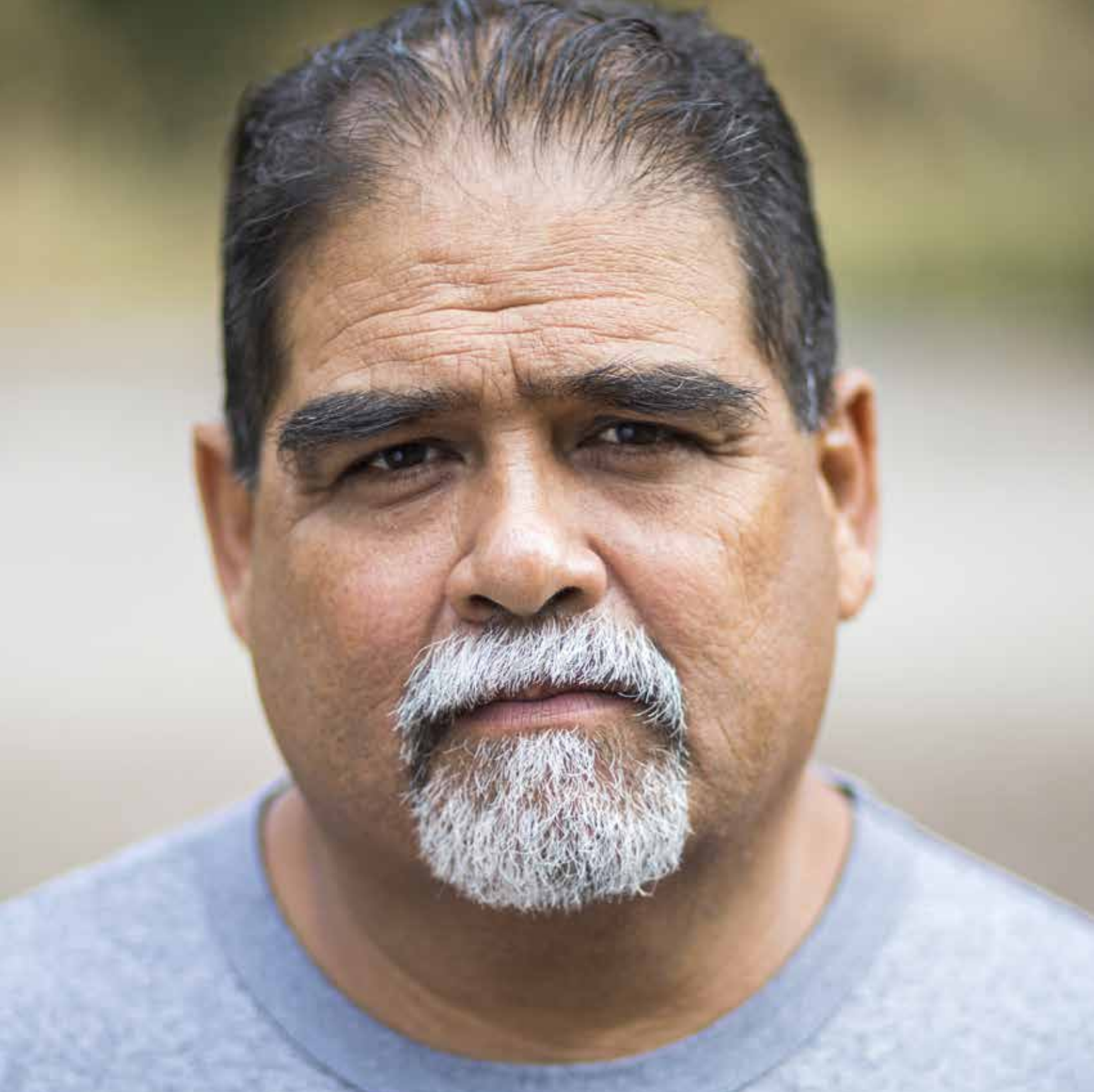
Prior to filling a prescription, our pharmacy team will confirm prescription benefits coverage with a patient's insurance company. To provide an added value to our patients, our team also looks for co-payment assistance resources that may be available through the drug manufacturer or other patient assistance programs. Since we routinely provide medications to patients, in most cases your prescription can be filled on the same day as your appointment.

Prescriptions filled at our office are part of the comprehensive care that we provide to our patients, but you are free to use any pharmacy that you choose.

## Medication Safety, Storage, Handling & Disposal

With any medication you are prescribed, it's important to understand the proper way to take the medication and how to store, handle or dispose of any medication that you are no longer using.

- Keep medication put away and out of a child's reach and sight.
- Every time you use medication, put it away. This includes prescription medication and over the counter medicines, vitamins and other supplements that you take.
- Use safety caps, and make sure they are locked.
- Educate children about medicine safety.
- Ask your guests to keep their medications put up and away from a child's reach and site.
- Read package inserts or information provided by your pharmacy to understand when and how to take the medication, and about any special storage directions.
- Store medications in their original, labeled containers.
- Keep medications in a cool, dry area, or as directed.
- Never take expired medication.
- Never take medication that is prescribed for somebody else, or share your medication.
- Keep Poison Prevention's information handy and program their number in your phone. Their toll free number is: **800-222-1222**.



## **How to Manage Your Side Effects**

Depending on the type of cancer a person has and their overall health, they may or may not experience side effects from the treatment they are receiving for their cancer. Many advancements have been made to help minimize side effects that a person may experience when being treated for cancer. Our health care team can assist patients in ways best manage them.

## Managing Your Treatment Side Effects

### Low Energy / Fatigue

Fatigue is one of the most common and distressing symptoms of cancer treatment. It is extreme tiredness that can range from having low energy levels to difficulty performing normal daily activities. Fatigue usually increases over the course of treatment and peaks at the end of treatment.

Tips to help manage fatigue:

- Drinking 8 glasses of water per day, unless otherwise instructed by your physician.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Prioritize and pace activities to conserve energy.
- Perform regular exercise such as walking or yoga.
- Get 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Take frequent naps, but limit them to no longer than 45 minutes.

### Chemo Brain

Chemo brain is difficulty thinking clearly or having trouble remembering details during or after treatment. You may experience lack of focus, decreased ability to concentrate, trouble with word finding, and forgetfulness. This can continue after treatment.

Ways to minimize this effect include:

- Using a daily planner to keep track of things or making a to-do list.
- Solving crossword puzzles or number games.
- Focusing on one thing at a time. Multitasking may be difficult.
- Setting a routine. This can make it easier to remember your plans.
- Getting 8 hours of sleep each night.

### Constipation

Constipation is when you have infrequent or difficulty passing stools. Pain medications and certain cancer treatments can cause constipation. You might have stomach cramps, bloating, or burping.

Things you can do to relieve constipation include:

- Drinking 8 glasses of water per day, unless otherwise instructed by your physician.
- Perform regular exercise or physical activity.
- Drink warm/hot liquids.
- Add prunes or prune juice to your diet.
- Increase fiber intake.
- Try over the counter medications, such as stool softeners, as directed by your health care team.

### Diarrhea

Diarrhea is when you have unformed or liquid stool. Diarrhea can lead to serious complications such as dehydration, treatment delays, or admission to the hospital. If you are experiencing severe diarrhea, please call the clinic to speak to a member of our care team.

Suggestions to help with mild diarrhea:

- Drinking 8 glasses of water per day, unless otherwise instructed by your physician.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, fatty/fried foods, and dairy.
- Eat bland/low fiber foods (bananas, white rice, cereal, toast, applesauce, Jello).
- Use over-the-counter medications such as loperamide (Imodium® AD) with approval by your health care team.



## Managing Your Treatment Side Effects

### Hair Loss

Some treatment may cause loss of hair on the head, face, and other parts of the body. If you are interested in purchasing a wig or other type of head covering, please ask a member of our team.

Suggestions to help with hair loss include:

- Use a soft bristle hairbrush or a wide tooth comb.
- Avoid shampoo with strong detergents, chemicals, or fragrances.
- Avoid hair dryers, hot curlers, or curling irons.
- Sleep on a satin pillowcase.

### Nausea/Vomiting

Nausea and vomiting can occur at any point throughout treatment. There are several medications that can help relieve nausea and vomiting. Your health care team will discuss which ones are best for you.

Ways to help manage nausea/vomiting include:

- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Drink 8 glasses of water per day, unless otherwise instructed by your physician.
- Try peppermint or ginger flavored lozenges.
- Follow the BRAT diet during nausea (bananas, rice, applesauce and toast).
- Eat cool or room temperature foods.
- Take anti-nausea medications as prescribed by your provider. If the anti-nausea medicine is not working, please reach out to a member of your health care team.

### Skin Irritation/Rash

Treatment may cause skin changes such as redness, rash, and itchy/dry flaky skin. Notify the clinic of any changes to your skin. Suggestions to help with skin irritation/rash:

- Avoid direct sunlight. Wear sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher) when outside.
- Stay hydrated by drinking 8 glasses of water per day, unless otherwise instructed by your physician.
- Avoid perfumed or colored soaps, lotions, and laundry detergents.
- Avoid scratching.
- Talk with our health care team about recommended creams or lotions.

### Sore Mouth/Throat (Mucositis)

Some treatments can harm the lining of the mouth and throat which can cause painful sores. These sores can affect eating, drinking, and talking. Ways to help a sore mouth/throat:

- Brush teeth with a soft bristle toothbrush after meals and at bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol-based mouthwashes.
- Use a salt and soda rinse after meals and at bedtime (1 teaspoon of salt + 1 teaspoon of baking soda in 1 pint of warm water). Swish and spit.
- Use a straw when drinking.
- Avoid hot, spicy, and crunchy foods.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages and tobacco products.
- Try ice chips or popsicles to help soothe your mouth.

### **Weight Loss**

You may experience weight loss during your cancer treatment. Losing weight can be due to changes in the immune system or metabolism, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, mouth sores, loss of taste, depression, and pain. If you are losing weight because of these symptoms or they are preventing you from eating, please notify your health care team. Ways to help manage weight loss:

- Increase calories and protein.
- Eat small, frequent meals.
- Keep healthy snacks available.

### **Late Term Side Effects**

Sometimes the side effects of treatment don't occur for months or years after a person has received cancer treatment. It's important for you and your oncologist to discuss any side effects that you are currently experiencing and potential late-term effects that you will need to be aware of.

### **Helpful Resources for Managing Treatment Side Effects**

The National Cancer Institute provides medical advice and practical tips to help you during your chemotherapy treatment: [cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/side-effects](https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/side-effects). They also have information to help you manage radiation treatment side effects at: [cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/types/radiation-therapy/side-effects](https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/types/radiation-therapy/side-effects).

The American Cancer Society also has some very good resources to help you deal with many types side effects: [cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects.html](https://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects.html).





## **Taking Care of Yourself**

Self-care is important for everyone. It is even more essential for cancer patients to take care of themselves during treatment when you can be experiencing additional stress. Your body will benefit from extra care and attention. The National Cancer Institute provides publications for patients and their families to help them with ways to cope with cancer. You can find these publications at: [cancer.gov/publications/patient-education](https://cancer.gov/publications/patient-education).

## **Talking About Your Feelings**

It is normal to feel anxiety, frustration, and fear. Learning how to communicate and cope with these feelings is important. Some tips for coping include:

- Express your feelings and concerns. Take time to communicate with loved ones.
- Take it one day at a time, set priorities and readjust your schedule if necessary.



## Taking Care of Yourself

### Handling Stress

Stress can be caused by a variety of factors, such as changes in feelings and looks, family dynamics, or financial concerns. There are many ways to cope with stress. A few techniques that may help include:

- Meditation, yoga and deep breathing exercises can help your body relax.
- Stretch, take a hot bath, and rest.
- Journal, paint, or color.

### Exercising

Exercising during treatment eases side effects and boosts the immune system. It helps your heart, protects bones, and can relieve feelings of depression. Side effects from treatment can make exercising difficult, but try to be as active as possible. Some exercise suggestions are:

- Start slow and build up to 30 minutes per day. Break up the exercises into three 10-minute sessions.
- Make exercise fun. Recruit a buddy or listen to music with headphones.
- Look for exercise classes designed for cancer patients—these can sometimes be found in hospitals, local health clubs or local cancer support groups.
- Listen to your body. Avoid exercising if you're not feeling well or running a fever.

### Eating a Well-Balanced Diet

Nutrition is an important part of treatment. Eating healthy can help you feel better, maintain strength, tolerate treatment side effects more easily and heal faster. Good nutrition includes:

- Eating a balanced diet with a variety of foods, such as fruits, veggies, whole grains, and lean protein. Using meal replacements may be necessary to provide adequate nutrition (i.e. Ensure, Enlive, Carnation Instant Breakfast, etc.).
- Drinking 8 glasses of water per day, unless otherwise instructed by your physician.
- Limiting the amount of fat, sugar, and salt in your diet.
- If you become sensitive to smells, preparing low aroma foods can help avoid potential triggers that could make you nauseous or decrease your appetite.
- Please discuss these recommendations with your provider.

The National Cancer Institute provides a publication to help patients and their families/caregivers. *Eating Hints: Before, During And After Cancer Treatment* is available online and can also be downloaded free of charge: [cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/eatinghints.pdf](https://cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/eatinghints.pdf).

### Over the Counter or Herbal Supplements

When it comes to vitamins or herbal supplements, it's best to remember that just because a product may be labeled as natural, it isn't always safe. It's important to discuss these with your doctor prior to taking them.

### Complementary & Alternative Medicine

Integrative therapies like massage, acupuncture or other relaxation therapies that can be used alongside traditional medical care to help address the whole person's needs. The National Cancer Institute provides a publication to help patients understand additional ways to cope with their cancer treatment, including side effects stress or other discomforts they may experience. *Thinking About Complementary and Alternative Medicine* is available free, online: [cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/thinking-about-cam](https://cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/thinking-about-cam).



## **Nobody Goes Through Cancer Alone**

Cancer is an illness that not only affects a patient who is fighting the disease, but their family as well. Palliative care helps them all to identify and understand what the patient's wishes are and what the goals are for their care. The goal of palliative care is to relieve a patient's suffering to provide the best possible quality of life for patients and their families.

## Palliative Care

Palliative care provides support for patients facing debilitating chronic diseases and life-threatening illnesses. It's an important part of the patient-focused care that our team provides. The goal of palliative care is to relieve a patient's suffering to provide the best possible quality of life for patients and their families.

A patient's quality of life can be improved by relieving symptoms that might include pain, depression, shortness of breath, fatigue, constipation, nausea, loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, and anxiety, their quality of life can be improved.

Palliative care is used in conjunction with the physician's plan of care, not in place of it. It can be an extra layer of support to address the needs of the patient. Palliative care can be used for any stage of a serious illness. It can also be provided along with curative treatment.

### **Benefits of Palliative Care**

The proven benefits of palliative care show that it can, in many cases, improve a patient's quality of life. Our goal is to help manage a patient's side effects, reduce their anxiety and depression, and provide effective pain control.

Pain control can include the use of pain medication as well as recommendations for complementary therapies such as massage, acupuncture, reiki and more.

Achieving this goal can help patients remain independent, live a full life, and stay as active as possible while fighting their illness. This may also help to increase life expectancy.

Palliative care provides emotional support to patients and their families when they are faced with difficult decisions about the goals of care and complex treatment choices. It has been shown to decrease emergency room visits, hospital admissions and readmissions, by keeping patients in their homes where they are most comfortable, for as long as possible.

A palliative care practitioner can spend time with patients to understand their goals and help them understand their treatment choices. Palliative care practitioners can communicate to a patient's doctors, making sure everyone on the team understands what a patient wants. Giving patients more control over their healthcare can also improve their quality of life.

Help is also available with navigating the sometimes-difficult conversations about advance care planning and the importance of having advance directives to help guide caregivers in honoring the patient's wishes during treatment and at the end of life.

Our palliative care team can assist patients in creating their advanced care directives if needed.

### **Team Approach**

As part of our team approach to care, our patients can receive this specialized service at all stages of their illness, while they are receiving their treatments at our offices, and during follow-up care. Palliative care practitioners are highly experienced in assisting patients with pain and symptom relief, as well as understanding and coordinating patients' care.

## When to Call the Clinic

Not all symptoms can be managed at home. The list below includes potential complications and when those should be reported to the clinic. This list does not include every side effect you may experience during treatment.

Please contact your health care team in the recommended time frame or if you are experiencing side effects that are not included in the table.

PROBLEM	EMERGENCY Dial 911 or go to closest emergency room	Medical attention is needed. Call clinic ASAP	Contact clinic within 24 hours
Fever		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 100.4, with/without chills</li> </ul>	
Alertness or Consciousness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unconscious</li> <li>• Unable to arouse</li> <li>• Seizure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or increased confusion</li> <li>• Change in level of alertness</li> <li>• Change in vision</li> <li>• Numbness, tingling or loss of movement of limbs</li> <li>• Difficulty swallowing</li> <li>• Lethargic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mood changes, irritable, tearful</li> <li>• Sleeplessness</li> <li>• Change in energy level</li> <li>• Tremors/shakes</li> <li>• Not able to get around</li> </ul>
Bleeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncontrollable, consistent bleeding</li> <li>• Unconscious</li> <li>• Bloody or “coffee ground” appearing vomit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or increased bleeding</li> <li>• Bloody urine or diarrhea</li> <li>• Unable to stop nosebleed</li> <li>• Fall or injury</li> <li>• One or more feminine pad(s) per hour used</li> <li>• New little red or purple spots on skin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent, controlled bleeding</li> <li>• New bruising</li> </ul>
Breathing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling as though you can’t get enough air</li> <li>• Choking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheezing with breaths</li> <li>• Persistent, continuous cough</li> <li>• Coughing up blood or green/yellow mucous</li> <li>• New shortness of breath at rest or with minimal activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gets “winded” more often with minimal activity</li> </ul>

Recognizing and alerting us as indicated below may prevent ER visits, hospitalizations, treatment delays or additional complications.

## A PHYSICIAN IS AVAILABLE 24/7

PROBLEM	<b>EMERGENCY</b> Dial 911 or go to closest emergency room	Medical attention is needed. Call clinic ASAP	Contact clinic within 24 hours
Mouth Pain / Mucositis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having difficulty breathing</li> <li>• Choking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot swallow</li> <li>• Bright red blood in mouth</li> <li>• Pain not controlled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White patches or sores appear on gums or mouth</li> <li>• Difficulty swallowing</li> <li>• Toothache</li> </ul>
Nausea / Vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncontrolled, constant nausea and vomiting</li> <li>• Bloody or “coffee ground” appearing vomit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weakness/dizziness along with nausea/ vomiting</li> <li>• Severe stomach pain with vomiting</li> <li>• Projectile vomiting (vomiting with force that shoots a long distance)</li> <li>• Medicine not kept down</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nausea with no relief from anti-nausea medications</li> <li>• Unable to keep food or liquids down</li> </ul>
Pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe chest/arm pain</li> <li>• Severe squeezing or pressure in chest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New or uncontrolled pain</li> <li>• Headaches not relieved by medication</li> <li>• Chest discomfort</li> <li>• Pounding heart</li> <li>• Strong stomach pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sores or painful areas on skin or mouth</li> <li>• Pain not relieved by medication</li> </ul>
Rash		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sudden onset body rash</li> <li>• Rash with severe pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in existing skin rash</li> </ul>
Swelling		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sudden swelling with or without pain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swollen legs or hands</li> <li>• Swelling around an old IV site</li> </ul>
Urination		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bloody or painful urination</li> <li>• Burning on urination</li> <li>• Unable to urinate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in color or odor of urine</li> </ul>

## Important Information / Helpful Resources

### **Know Your Family's Health History**

Your family's health history can hold important clues as to your risk for developing cancer. This includes first-degree relatives (parents, siblings, children), and second-degree relatives (grandparents, grandchildren, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces, and half-siblings). A useful tool to help you record your family history and share it with others is: [phgkb.cdc.gov/FHH/html/index.html](http://phgkb.cdc.gov/FHH/html/index.html).

### **Telemedicine**

As part of our commitment to our patients, we offer telemedicine services as authorized by your insurance company. Patients can connect via computer with their physician from the comfort of their own home and receive real-time care that they are used to with an in-person office visit. Your physician will determine if this type of visit is appropriate as part of your care.

### **Laboratory Facilities**

As a convenience for our patients, we have laboratory facilities on-site at most of our offices, however they are not part of our practice. It is important for patients to make sure that the tests ordered are covered under their insurance plan, and that the lab themselves are part of their insurance network. Lab hours will be posted at each site.

### **Insurance Plans**

Our practice accepts many different insurance plans. Please call our office to verify coverage, prior to your first appointment, or if your insurance plans change.

We have Financial Counselors on staff who will verify your insurance prior to each visit/service and obtain insurance authorization when necessary. Additionally, they will explain your benefits, co-pays and co-insurance costs, answer questions about balances, and assist you in finding resources if needed for your medications.

Please keep in mind that some insurance plans can take up to 10–14 business days to authorize tests or drug regimens. Be sure to inform us of any insurance changes as soon as possible to avoid delays in treatment and visits.

All patients are encouraged to check with their insurance plan to see what types of ancillary care may be available, such as psychological care, social worker, exercise programs, etc.

## **Website**

Patients can access information about our practice and providers on our website. In addition, you can find contact information and a map for each of our clinic locations.

We are passionate about educating patients and have a variety of topics to answer many questions about cancer and different types of treatments.

It's important for everyone to know about cancer screening so we've provided information about the different types of cancer screenings that are available. While cancer screening may not prevent the disease, it is one of the most important things you can do for your health.

Cancer screening tests are used to detect cancer, even before you might have symptoms. The goal of screening is to find cancer early, when chances of successful treatment are highest.

There are many ways that a person can lower their risk of cancer, so you'll find helpful information to empower you to make those choices.

We've also included information about coping with your cancer, and a section to help caregivers. Our hope is that you will use our website as a resource to assist you and your loved ones during your cancer journey.

You can access our website at: [ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com](http://ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com)

## **Patient Portal**

From our website, you can access our patient portal where you can review your labs. You can also securely communicate with your care team and see any future scheduled appointments.

## **Online Bill Pay**

You can make a payment anywhere, any time and on any device with internet access. You will be able to see your current balance and will have an option to email yourself a receipt and/or print a receipt as soon as the payment has posted. We've provided a link on our website.

## **Patient Forms**

For your convenience, we have many patient forms available for download on our website.

### **Downloadable Patient Brochures** [ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com/patient-brochures/](http://ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com/patient-brochures/)

- Advance Care Planning
- Genetic Testing
- In-Office Dispensing
- Patient Treatment Guide
- Palliative Care
- Medical Interventions
- What You Should Know About Your Scan

## **Other Helpful Education / Resources**

- [ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com/helpful-resources](http://ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com/helpful-resources)
- [ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com/medication-safety-storage-handling-disposal](http://ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com/medication-safety-storage-handling-disposal)
- [ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com/lowering-your-cancer-risk](http://ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com/lowering-your-cancer-risk)
- [ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com/cancer-screening](http://ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com/cancer-screening)





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**ArizonaBloodAndCancerSpecialists.com · 800-201-7220**  
Caring for patients in southern Arizona.

Arizona Blood and Cancer Specialists, PLLC complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Arizona Breast Health Specialists (a division of Arizona Blood and Cancer Specialists, PLLC) does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

Arizona Blood and Cancer Specialists, PLLC cumple con las leyes federates de derechos civiles aplicables y no discrimina por motivos de raza, color, nacionalidad, edad, discapacidad o sexo.

ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al: 1-800-201-7220.

Arizona Blood and Cancer Specialists, PLLC bik'ehgo hójit' [nigíí bidadeeti'igíí Wááshindoon t'áá át' é bilá'ashdla'ii bee bá ádaahaazt' i'igíí bíbee haz' ágnii dóo doo ak'ijj' nitsáhakees da díi ninahjj' al'áá dadine' é, dine' é bikági át'ehigíí, bináahai'igíí, nazhniit' ago da, éi doodaii' asdzáni dóo diné át'ehigíí.

Díi baa akó nínizin: Díi saad bee yánilti'go Diné Bizaad, saad bee áká'ánida'áwo'déé', t'áá jii'eh, éi ná hóló, kojí' hódíilnih. 1-800-201-7220.



Arizona Blood & Cancer Specialists is accredited by the ACR for imaging services.

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