**CHEMOTHERAPY: HELPFUL HINTS**



**Chemotherapy can cause a number of side effects which can affect a person’s quality of life. The Acute Oncology Team at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust have created this leaflet of helpful hints that could be tried to help with these side effects and to compliment the medications given alongside your treatment.**

**Nausea**

Eating little and often will help your body cope with the chemotherapy. Not eating will lead to a build-up of the toxins and can make you feel worse.

**HINTS**

1. Have breakfast on the day of your chemotherapy.

2. Ensure you have plenty of snacks available to help you throughout the day (dry biscuits, crackers, crisps, dry toast etc.)

3. Take the medication given by the chemotherapy day unit as instructed.

4. If you start to feel sick: sip warmed full sugar lemonade, it will help settle your stomach lining and reduce the symptoms.

5. Sucking boiled sweets.

6. Often cold foods prepared in advance can eliminate the smell of foods cooking which can trigger Nausea

7. Ginger is a very good way of helping nausea naturally including ginger ale, biscuits, teas or crystallised ginger.

**Sore mouth**

As chemotherapy acts on the fast growing cells within the body the mucous lining of the mouth and digestive tract can become very dry and sore.

**HINTS**

1. Ice can help to protect the lining of the mouth. Using crushed ice or ice lollies for the three days post chemotherapy can help
2. Soft tooth brush to clean your teeth post each meal to prevent damage to the gums.
3. Lip moisturiser to keep your lips protected
4. Use mouth wash with 0% alcohol
5. Sucking boiled sweets can increase saliva production and help
6. Seek help early should any soreness happen. U**se the help line number:** **03332226646**

**Diarrhoea**

The protective layer of your bowel becomes less protected because the fast growing cells within your body are reduced when you’re on chemotherapy.

**HINTS**

1. Make a note of how many times you have gone to the toilet
2. Ensure you drink water regularly
3. Jelly Babies/Jelly/pink and white marshmallows can help
4. Take the medication (Imodium) each time you have Diarrhoea (up to 8 a day)
5. Low fibre diet including white bread/pasta/rice

**Fatigue**

One of the hardest side effects to manage as it is very individual.

**HINTS**

1. Give your body time to rest. A siesta each day after lunch if possible to train your body to give you energy during the morning and afternoon.
2. Try and keep your body in a routine; good-quality sleep is very important and may help to relieve fatigue.
3. Get plenty of gentle physical activity. It will help boost your appetite and give you more energy. Listen to your body and do a little every day.
4. Ensure you are well hydrated
5. Diet high in protein including chicken, eggs, salmon, cheese, beans/pulses. This will help you maintain or regain your strength.
6. Epsom salts for bathing in.

**Hair loss**

Not all chemotherapy causes hair loss. If you are concerned about this, ask your Consultant / keyworker for more information.

**HINTS**

1. You will start to notice hair loss leading up to or just after your second cycle of chemotherapy
2. Whether you are wearing a wig, head covering or beautifully bare, it is important to take good care of your scalp. This will help improve both the way your scalp looks and feels and can help to promote a healthy situation to encourage new hair growth.
3. The advice in general is for everyone and any form of treatment with the exception of radiology to the scalp.
4. Wash your scalp regularly. Unless you have a specific scalp problem you are best advised to wash your scalp in the morning and at night. Use a natural or organic shampoo or face wash
5. Unless you have any scalp problems, massage your scalp, try five massage rounds to keep the scalp healthy
6. Keep some fresh wipes in your bag for freshening up your scalp when out all day
7. Use a light natural or organic oil to seal in moisture. Organic virgin oil is a great kitchen cupboard option (this oil is so pure it is often recommended for baby’s skin as it is so mild yet traps a light moisture layer). You can also use almond oil.
8. Wash any head covering (wigs and head coverings) regularly. A good tip is to use a warm (but not hot) damp flannel to wipe out the interior of any head coverings after wearing and allow to dry. This will keep your head wear clean and fresh for your scalp
9. Keep out of the sun by covering up. If you are bare then wear a minimum factor of SPF30. A good idea is to use sun lotions designed for the face as these tend to be less greasy and thus more comfortable on the scalp.

 **SHOPPING LIST**

* Soft tooth brush
* Mouth wash 0% Alcohol
* Boiled sweets
* Full sugar lemonade
* Crisps
* Crackers
* Dry biscuits: ginger, rich tea, morning coffee etc.
* Almond oil
* Pink and white marshmallows
* Lip balm
* Ginger ale
* Ice lollies
* Wide straws
* Unperformed shower gel and moisturiser
* Dark nail varnish for patients on Docetaxel
* Oxo cubes: good alternative to tea and coffee
* Epsom salts helps overall well being



For more self-coping techniques around fatigue, emotional wellbeing, physical activity and nutrition, book on to a Macmillan Living Well Session. It is an opportunity to hear from others in similar situations and learn further tips on how to self-manage these side effects as well as find out further information about local services available for you.

