

## ONCOLOGY

## After Chemotherapy Care Instructions

## Anemia

*What is anemia?*

Cancer or cancer treatment may cause anemia. Anemia is a low level of red blood cells, which carry oxygen throughout your body. Many things can cause anemia. Lack of iron is one of the most common causes in people without cancer.

Having anemia can make you tired and weak. You may also have trouble focusing on something.

*What can I do at home to care for myself?*

- Eat a well-balanced diet that includes foods that are high in protein and are rich in iron. Meat, peanut butter, eggs, beans, chicken, leafy greens, and raisins are good choices.
- Save your energy. Choose the most important things to do each day.
- Balance rest with activity. Try to sleep at least 8 hours each night. You may need to take short naps during the day.
- Ask for help from family and friends to do daily household chores such as cleaning, cooking, or shopping for groceries.
- If your physician recommends iron pills, try to take them on an empty stomach about 1 hour before or 2 hours after meals. However, you may need to take iron with food to avoid an upset stomach.
- Do not take antacids or drink milk or caffeine drinks (such as coffee, tea, or cola) at the same time or within 2 hours of the time that you take your iron pill. They can make it hard for your body to absorb the iron.
- Vitamin C (from food or supplements) helps your body absorb iron. Try taking iron pills with a glass of orange juice or some other food that is high in vitamin C, such as citrus fruits.

(over)

*continued*

***When should I call  
my physician?***

- If you forget to take an iron pill, do not take a double dose of iron the next time you take a pill.
- Keep iron pills out of the reach of small children. An overdose of iron can be very dangerous for them.
  
- You have chest pain or pressure. This may occur with:
  - Shortness of breath.
  - Dizziness or lightheadedness.
  - A fast or uneven pulse.
  - Chest pain. If you have chest pains, call 911 or go to the Emergency Department.

If you cannot reach your health care team or your symptoms get worse, go to Urgent Care or the Emergency Department.