



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Learning About How Chemotherapy Is Given

Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

Chemotherapy uses medicines to kill cancer cells. It's often called "chemo." Chemo may slow cancer growth, stop cancer from spreading, or help get rid of the cancer.

How can chemotherapy be given?

Chemo may be given in different ways. For example, chemo may be put into the bloodstream, put directly into an organ, or swallowed as a pill.

Chemo that goes into the bloodstream

Chemo can be given directly into a vein through an IV (intravenous) tube called a catheter. It's usually put in your hand or lower arm. It allows the chemo medicines to go into your bloodstream and kill cancer cells throughout your body.

Venous access devices (VAD)

A venous access device (VAD) is a thin tube used to give chemo medicines into a large vein. A port-a-cath, or port, is a type of VAD that allows easy access in the chest. It is a small, round disc that usually goes under the skin on your chest.

A port allows you to take several medicines at one time. And it makes it easier to get repeated chemo treatments over time. It also allows for chemo treatments to be given with fewer needle sticks in the skin.

A small pump is sometimes attached to a port. This controls how much medicine is given and how fast it goes in.

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Most ports stay in place until the chemo treatments are finished.

Shots

Chemo may also be given as a shot (injection) in a muscle or under the skin. You may get the shot in your arm, leg, or belly.

Chemo that you swallow

Some chemo medicines may be taken in pills, capsules, or liquids that you swallow (oral). Only certain kinds of chemo drugs are available in this form. Sometimes this type of chemo can be taken at home.

Chemo given in a specific part of the body

Doctors may give doses of chemo in a certain organ or part of the body. This allows the medicines to go straight to where the cancer is. This method also may cause fewer side effects.

The medicines may be put directly into:

- An artery that leads to an organ, such as the liver, or a part of your body where the cancer is.
- The fluid around the brain and spinal cord. This may be done if treatment is needed for a brain tumor.
- An organ through a passage from outside of your body. For example, chemo can be put in the bladder through the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder.
- An area that contains the organ where the cancer is. For example, by putting chemo in the abdominal cavity, the stomach or liver can be treated.
- A tumor. A shot may be used for tumors under the skin.

Chemo that goes onto the skin

Chemo medicines may be mixed into a cream that you rub on your skin. This may be done to treat skin cancer. This treatment may be done at home.

What else should you know about chemotherapy?

Chemo can be given at different locations, such as a hospital, a doctor's office, or a clinic. Sometimes chemo treatments may be done at home.

You may get chemo in "cycles." This means that you get treatments for a set period of time. Then you take a break before you start again.

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Doctors use chemo to treat many kinds of cancer. But it can affect healthy cells, along with killing the cancer cells. So you may have side effects, such as nausea, vomiting, and fatigue. The side effects depend on the type of chemo you get. Your doctor will recommend that you take good care of yourself to prevent illness and infections. This is because chemo may weaken your body's immune system.

Your medical team will work closely with you to help manage side effects. For example, your doctor may give you medicines to help with nausea. And there are ways you can manage your side effects at home.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

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