

Infusion for Cancer Treatment: 10 Things to Bring with You



If you're about to start infusions for cancer treatment, you might be nervous as you head to your first appointment. That's understandable. You may not know what to expect other than that you'll be there for a few hours.

Packing a personal care bag of items can help you stay calm and comfortable. It can change your infusion experience for the better. Here are 10 things to put into your care bag before you go to the infusion clinic.

1. Cozy clothes. Some treatments can last several hours. You'll want to be comfortable during that time. The infusion center temperature may feel hot or cold. Since your body temperature may swing from cold to hot and back again, dress in layers. A portable rechargeable or battery-operated fan can help when you're feeling hot. Also consider:

- Sweatpants or yoga pants made in light materials in case you sweat
- A short-sleeved shirt so the nurse can draw blood or start an IV in your arm. If you have a port in your chest, consider wearing a V-neck or button-down shirt. Your nurse will be able to more easily access your port. Think about bringing an extra shirt in case you sweat through your first one.
- A light sweater
- A hat. Your head may get cold, especially if you're losing your hair.
- Closed-toe shoes, slippers, or warm, comfy socks

2. Healthy snacks and drinks. There may be snacks or drinks at the infusion center. But you may want to bring your own from home. A water bottle is a must-have. Sip plenty of fluids to help your body flush out toxins. Some snack ideas from the American Cancer Society include:

- A container of dry cereal
- Crackers with cheese or peanut butter
- Fruit, fresh or dried
- Granola or trail mix
- A smoothie
- Pretzels
- Sports drinks
- Low-fat yogurt

Some treatments can dry out your mouth. So pack some hard candies to suck on, like ginger candy or peppermints. Be sure to follow any dietary restrictions from your healthcare team.

3. Other medicines. If you need to take any medicines later that day, bring them along. If your appointment takes longer than expected, you won't miss a dose or have to race home for them. Ask your healthcare team if it's OK to take these medicines during treatment.

4. Comfort items. Security blankets aren't just for kids. While infusion centers offer blankets, you may feel more relaxed if you snuggle up in one from home. You can even bring your own pillow, too, in case you take a nap. Pack other personal items that comfort you like:

- Photos of loved ones or pets
- An inspirational photo

- A copy of an uplifting quote
- A spiritual item, like a religious text, that offers you peace

5. Reading material. A book, magazine, or electronic device can offer a distraction for a few hours.

6. Crafts. It can help to keep your hands and mind busy. Enjoy crocheting or knitting? Bring your latest project along. Don't feel like starting a new hobby? Try an adult coloring book or use a sketchpad for doodling.

7. Headphones and your favorite playlist. Listening to the hum of your infusion machine for a few hours can get old. Block it out with relaxing music. You can also listen to a meditation app, or watch a TV show or movie on your phone or laptop. Put together a playlist of songs that help you feel calm, motivated, or happy. You may choose quiet time with a pair of earplugs.

8. Lip balm. Your mouth and lips may feel dry during treatment. A lip balm may help. Ask your healthcare team if you should use a certain type.

9. A journal. Bottling up your feelings is never good, especially as you go through treatment. Instead, jot down your thoughts and feelings in a notebook. If you don't have one handy, use the notes app on your phone or tablet. Your first writing prompt? Write down everything you're grateful for, no matter how big or small. You can look back on it anytime you need some inspiration.

Another bonus: You can use this notebook later on to write down any side effects that you have from treatment. Include questions for your oncologist or healthcare team to ask at your next appointment.

10. Games or puzzles. You may feel confused or have trouble focusing at times during treatment. But it helps to keep your mind active. Try working through a book of crossword puzzles, a word search, or number puzzles. There are also a variety of apps or online games for devices. Make it a social event by bringing a board game or a deck of cards. You can invite others near you to play along.

And while you can't fit them into a bag or purse, remember that you can always ask a family member or friend to keep you company at the clinic. There's no better comfort than the support of a loved one.

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