

Discharge Instructions After Treatment for Cancer of the Testicles



You have been diagnosed with testicular cancer. This is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells in the testicles. Surgery is the most common treatment. Chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and high-dose chemotherapy with stem cell transplant are other choices. This sheet will help you learn how to care for yourself after surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. It also gives you information on what to watch for and when to call your healthcare provider.

Always follow any instructions you get from your healthcare providers. Contact them if you have any questions. Know how to reach your provider anytime, including after office hours and on weekends and holidays. Fill any prescriptions you are given, including those for pain, nausea, or diarrhea. Know what your prescription medicines are for, when and how to take them, and what to do if they don't work.

Home care after surgery

Here's what to do at home after surgery for testicular cancer.

Incision care

Tips for incision care include:

- Don't shower, swim, or use a bathtub or hot tub until your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Keep your incision clean and dry.
- Wash your incision gently with mild soap and warm water. Don't scrub the incision. Pat it dry.
- Check your incision every day for redness or drainage and to make sure it's not opening up.
- Watch for swelling around your incision, as well as in your scrotum, groin, and leg.

Activity

Do's and don'ts include:

- Don't worry if you feel more tired than usual. Fatigue and weakness are common for a few weeks after this surgery.
- Do listen to your body. If an activity causes pain, stop. If you're tired, rest.
- Do start taking short walks. Slowly increase your pace and distance as you feel able.
- Don't do strenuous activities, such as mowing the lawn, using a vacuum cleaner, working out, or playing sports until your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Don't lift anything heavier than 10 pounds until your provider says it's OK.
- Don't drive until you are free of pain and no longer taking prescription pain medicines. This may take a few weeks.

Diet

Tips for diet include:

- Eat a healthy diet that's mostly vegetables, fruits, beans, and whole grains.

- Stock up on easy to prepare foods.
- Eat foods high in protein and low in sugar and salt.
- Ask your healthcare provider before taking any vitamins, supplements, or over-the-counter medicines.
- To prevent constipation:
 - Eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
 - Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day, unless your provider tells you to limit fluids.
 - Use a laxative or a mild stool softener if your provider says it's OK.

Home care after chemotherapy

Here's what to do at home after chemotherapy for testicular cancer.

Preventing or dealing with mouth sores

Many people get mouth sores during chemotherapy. So, don't be discouraged if you do, even if you're following all your healthcare provider's instructions. To help prevent mouth sores or to ease discomfort:

- Brush your teeth with a soft-bristle toothbrush after every meal.
- Don't use dental floss if your platelet count is low. Your healthcare providers will tell you if it's low.
- Use an oral swab or special soft toothbrush if your gums bleed while brushing.
- Use any mouthwash given to you as directed. Don't use mouthwash that has alcohol.
- Use salt and baking soda to clean your mouth and keep it moist. Mix 1/8 teaspoon of salt and 1/4 teaspoon of baking soda into 1 cup of warm water. Shake before each use. Swish and spit as often as you like.
- Let your healthcare provider know if your mouth is sore. Watch your mouth and tongue for white patches. This may be a sign of a fungal infection. This is a common side effect of chemotherapy. Be sure to tell your provider about these patches. You may need medicine to help you fight fungal infections.
- If your mouth or throat become dry or sore, take sips of cool water or suck on ice chips. Sugar-free gum and hard candy might also help.

Managing other side effects

Tips to handle other side effects include:

- Try to exercise as instructed by your healthcare provider. Exercise keeps you strong and keeps your heart and lungs active. It also helps you have more energy and may help you sleep better. Walk as much as you can without becoming dizzy or weak.
- Remember, many people feel sick and lose their appetite during treatment. Eat small meals several times a day to keep your strength up.
 - Choose bland foods with little taste or smell if you're reacting strongly to food.
 - Be sure to cook all food thoroughly. This kills bacteria and helps you prevent infection.
 - Eat foods that are soft. They are less likely to cause mouth or throat irritation.
- Keep clean. During treatment your body can't fight germs very well.

- Take short baths or showers with warm water. Don't use very hot or cold water.
- Use moisturizing soap. Treatment can make your skin dry.
- Apply moisturizing lotion several times a day to help relieve dry skin. Stay away from lotions that contain alcohol.
- Limit or prevent contact with possible sources of infection, such as people who are sick or large crowds.
- Extreme tiredness (fatigue) is common. Slowly increase your activity level and rest when needed. Don't try to push yourself.
- If you have diarrhea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids. Contact your healthcare provider before taking medicine for diarrhea. Keep your anal area clean and dry.

Home care after radiation therapy

Here's what to do at home after radiation therapy for testicular cancer. Keep in mind that some side effects don't start until weeks after treatment has started. And they will get better over time after treatment ends.

Skin care

Do's and don'ts include:

- Don't scrub the treated area. Use mild soap as instructed by your healthcare team.
- Don't be surprised if your radiation treatment causes sunburn-like skin changes in the area being treated. Ask your therapy team which lotions are best to relieve the burn and protect your skin.
- Don't remove ink marks unless your radiation therapist says it's OK.
- Protect your skin from heat or cold. Don't use hot tubs, saunas, heating pads, or ice packs.
- Wear soft, loose clothing that doesn't rub your skin.

Follow-up

Make a follow-up appointment as directed by your healthcare provider.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Chills
- Signs of infection around the incision (redness, fluid, warmth, pain)
- Nausea or vomiting that keeps you from eating and drinking
- Pain that gets worse and isn't relieved by medicine.
- Nausea or diarrhea that doesn't go away
- Scrotal swelling that gets worse
- Swelling, warmth, pain, or redness in an arm or leg

- New breathing trouble or shortness of breath

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