

Cancer Treatment and Flu Symptoms



Cancer treatments help to fight and kill cancer cells. But they can cause some side effects, too. Some of those side effects may make you feel like you have the flu. Read on to learn more about this, and what you can do.

Which symptoms feel like the flu?

For some people, cancer treatment can cause flu-like symptoms. These are some common flu-like symptoms you may feel after treatment:

- Fever
- Severe tiredness (fatigue)
- Muscle and joint pain
- Chills
- Headache
- Upset stomach (nausea) or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Ask your provider what types of side effects you may have with your treatment. Ask which symptoms you should report to your healthcare team.

Which cancer treatments can cause flu symptoms?

Several types of cancer treatment can cause flu symptoms. These include certain types of:

- Chemotherapy
- Hormone therapy
- Immunotherapy
- Radiation therapy
- Targeted therapy medicines

If you are wondering when you may start to feel these symptoms, it's different for everyone. Some people might feel a bit sick soon after their first treatment session. For others, it might take 1 or 2 days before symptoms start. This is because your body takes time to react to the medicine.

Remember, if you start having side effects after getting cancer treatment, it's important to tell your healthcare provider. They can help figure out what's going on and what to do to make you feel better.

How can you manage these symptoms?

If you are going through treatment and feel like you have the flu, here's what to do:

- Talk with your healthcare provider. Always tell your provider how you feel. They can prescribe you medicines to help with the side effects. Or they can adjust the treatment.

- Rest. Just like when you have the flu, your body needs time to heal. Balance rest and activity. Take a short nap and try to get a good night's sleep.
- Stay hydrated. Drink lots of water, juice, or broth. This keeps your body strong and can help prevent dehydration.
- Eat healthy. Even if you're not hungry, try to eat small meals more often. Foods like soup or crackers can be gentle on your stomach.

Talk with your healthcare provider

Flu symptoms can be a side effect of cancer treatment. But they can also be a sign of an infection. Always tell your healthcare team about any flu-like symptoms that you have. Make sure you know how to contact your healthcare team after hours and on weekends and holidays.

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