

Prostate Cancer: Chemotherapy



What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy (chemo) uses medicines to fight your cancer. Cancer cells grow fast, but the medicines can destroy them.

Some of your normal cells also grow quickly. Chemo can attack them too. This can cause side effects. Side effects often get better or go away after the treatment is over. In some cases they may continue long term.

When might chemo be used for prostate cancer?

Chemo can be used to treat advanced stage prostate cancer. It may be used if hormone therapy isn't working. Or chemo may be given along with hormone therapy.

How is chemo given for prostate cancer?

There are many different kinds of chemo medicines. The chemo medicines for prostate cancer are often given as an infusion through an IV (intravenous) line in a vein. Most people get this type of chemo at hospitals, infusion centers, or chemo clinics. You likely won't need to stay the night.

Some medicines (such as estramustine) are given as a pill that you take by mouth at home.

Chemo is done in cycles that last a few weeks. You'll take the medicines with time to rest after each cycle. This lets your body recover.

What types of medicines are used to treat prostate cancer?

The most common chemo medicine for prostate cancer is called docetaxel. It's often given with a steroid called prednisone. Other chemo medicines you might receive include cabazitaxel, mitoxantrone, carboplatin, cisplatin, and estramustine.

What side effects of chemo should you watch for?

Chemo is good for attacking cells that grow and divide quickly like cancer. But chemo attacks normal cells that divide quickly too. These can include the cells that line your gut and mouth, blood cells that are made in the bone marrow, and cells in hair follicles that cause your hair to grow. This can cause side effects. The side effects depend on the amount and type of medicine used. Side effects may happen in the days or weeks while you are getting chemo. It's a good idea to talk about them with your provider so you'll be ready to treat them.

Side effects might include:

- Hair loss
- Easy bruising or bleeding
- Feeling tired
- Feeling less interested in food
- Feeling sick to the stomach or throwing up (vomiting)
- Mouth sores
- Diarrhea

- Increased risk of infection
- Feeling tingling, burning, or numbness in the hands or feet (called neuropathy). This feeling can sometimes last for a while or be lifelong.

The good news is most of these side effects can be managed and treated. After your chemo treatment is done, most of the side effects usually improve or go away over time. In some cases they may be long term.

Talk with your providers about any side effects you have.

What are the next steps with your healthcare provider?

When you know which medicines you'll take, you'll want to write all their names down, and ask your provider how they work and what side effects they might have.

Talk with your healthcare providers about what signs to look for and when to call them. It's a good idea to get a number to reach them outside of office hours, on evenings, holidays, and weekends.

It's also a good idea to keep a diary of your side effects. You can write down any changes in your body, your thoughts, or your emotions. This list will help you if you have questions when you meet with your provider. You and your provider will work on a plan to treat your side effects.

© 2000-2027 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions
This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your Healthcare professional's instructions. Copyright Krames LLC.