

Discharge Instructions for Hodgkin Lymphoma



You have been diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma. This disease is one of a group of cancers called lymphomas. Lymphoma is a general term for cancers that start in your body's lymphatic system. The lymphatic system helps fight disease and infection. It goes to every part of your body.

Treatment for Hodgkin lymphoma may include chemotherapy (chemo), radiation therapy, immunotherapy, and, in some cases, stem cell transplant. Here's what you need to know about caring for yourself during and after treatment.

General guidelines

Follow any instructions from your healthcare provider. Be sure you:

- Take all medicines as directed.
- Understand what you can and can't do.
- Balance rest with activity. Take short naps during the day if you're tired. But try to move around and walk as much as you can.
- Keep your follow-up appointments.
- Call your healthcare provider if you have any questions or are concerned about any symptoms.

Ask your provider what signs to watch for and when to call. Know how to get help after office hours and on weekends and holidays.

Preventing and treating mouth sores

Chemotherapy is used to treat almost everyone with Hodgkin lymphoma. And many people get mouth sores during treatment. Mouth sores also can happen if you get radiation therapy to your head and neck. Here are some things you can do to help prevent them:

- See a dentist before starting treatment. Have a checkup and cleaning. Have any problems treated as soon as possible.
- Brush your teeth with a soft-bristle toothbrush after every meal and at bedtime. Talk with your provider if your gums bleed while brushing. Sponge brushes, mild toothpastes, and mouth rinses might be needed.
- Don't eat foods that are acidic, spicy, salty, coarse, or dry. Don't drink alcohol or soda. Don't use tobacco.
- Don't use dental floss if you have a low blood platelet count. This puts you at higher risk of bleeding. Your treatment team can tell you about your blood counts and what they mean.
- Use any mouthwashes or rinses as directed.
- If you can't brush your teeth or use mouthwash, talk with your provider about other ways to keep your mouth clean.
- Check your mouth and tongue for sores, bleeding, and cracks. Also check for white patches. This can be a sign of fungal infection. This is a common side effect of chemo. Tell your healthcare provider about any changes you notice. You may need medicine that can help.
- Try cool, soft foods that are easy to swallow. Using a straw may help.

Managing other side effects

- Let your healthcare provider know if you get a sore throat. It may mean you have an infection and need antibiotics.
- You may develop skin blisters and burns from radiation treatment. Let your provider know. There are creams to help improve healing, and protect your skin.
- Bathe or shower regularly to keep clean. During treatment, your body can't fight infections very well.
- Use soap or shower gel with moisturizers. Use lotion throughout the day. Treatment can make your skin dry and itchy.
- If you start having numbness, tingling, or "pins-and-needles" pain in your fingers or toes, tell your provider right away. These changes may be a sign of nerve damage called peripheral neuropathy.
- Be prepared for hair loss. Know that you can lose hair all over your body, including your pubic hair and sometimes even your eyebrows. You may want to cut your hair short and have hats or wigs ready.

You may have an upset stomach or vomiting during treatment. You may lose your appetite. Let your provider know. There are medicines that can help. Try to:

- Eat smaller amounts of food during the day.
- Include some of your favorite foods in your diet.
- Make sure you drink lots of water and other healthy drinks.
- Try soft, plain foods. These include pudding, gelatin, ice cream, sherbet, yogurt, or milkshakes.
- Make sure you cook all food well and store all food safely.

Follow-up care

- Make follow-up appointments as directed by your healthcare team.
- Tell your provider about any changes you notice in how you feel.
- Stay up-to-date on flu shots and vaccines. Check with your provider before getting any vaccines. Some vaccines are not safe to get while in cancer treatment.
- Keep all follow-up appointments. You'll need to be watched closely for the rest of your life.

When to call your healthcare provider

Talk to your healthcare provider about problems you should watch for. Be sure you know what number to call if you have questions or problems when your provider's office is closed. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your provider
- Signs of an infection, such as redness, pain, swelling, warmth, or drainage, or pain when you pass urine
- A cough, or coughing up yellow or green mucus
- Unusual bleeding or bleeding of any kind that does not stop
- New pain or pain that doesn't get better with treatment
- Headache, trouble focusing, or memory loss

- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Rash or itchy, raised, red areas on your skin (hives)
- Yellowish skin or whites of the eyes (jaundice)
- New lumps under your arms, on or near your neck, or on or near your groin
- New pain, redness, warmth, or swelling in an arm or leg

Call 911

Call 911 if you have:

- Heavy bleeding
- Trouble breathing, wheezing, cough, or chest pain
- New, sudden confusion

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