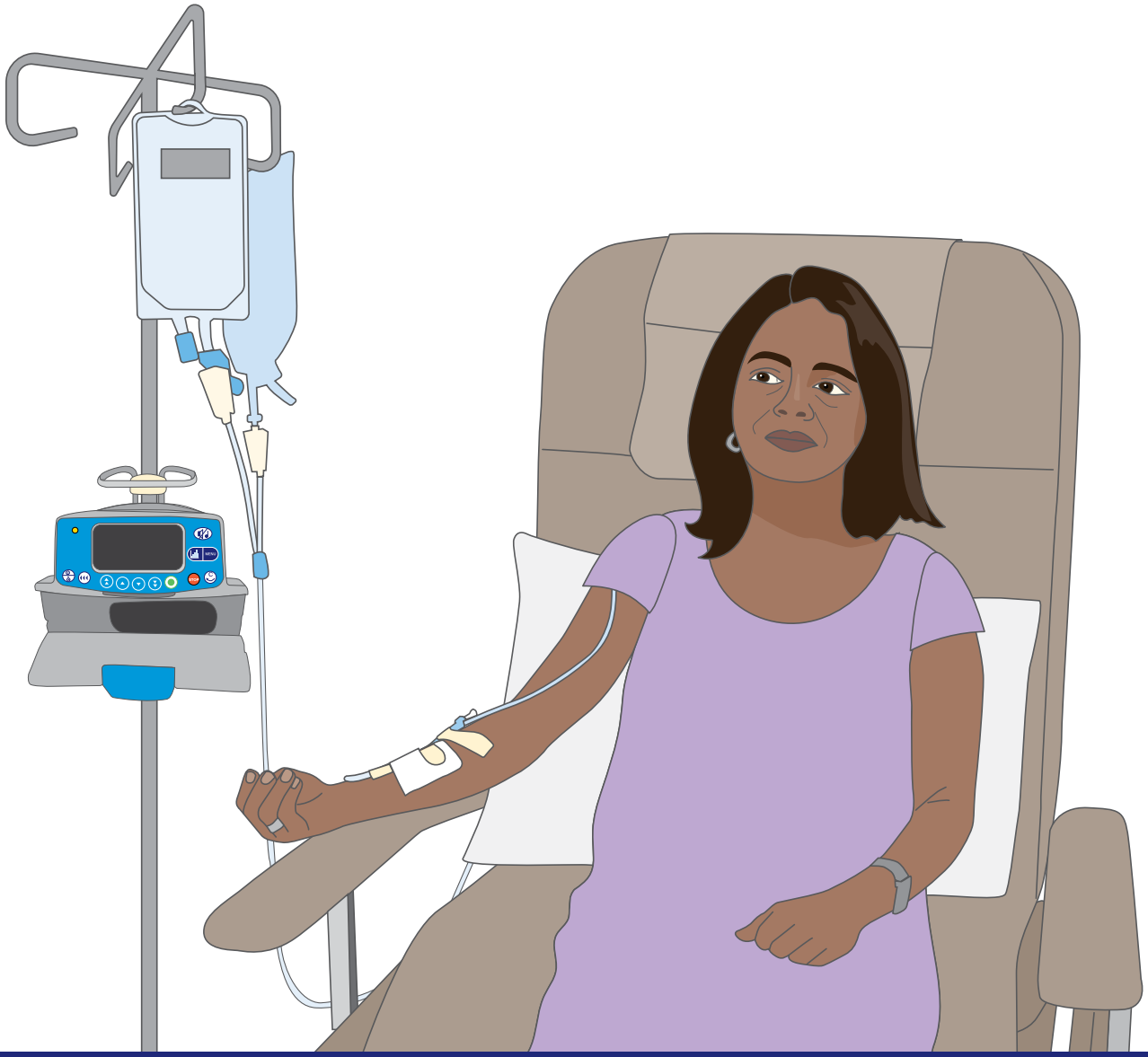
Cancer Council

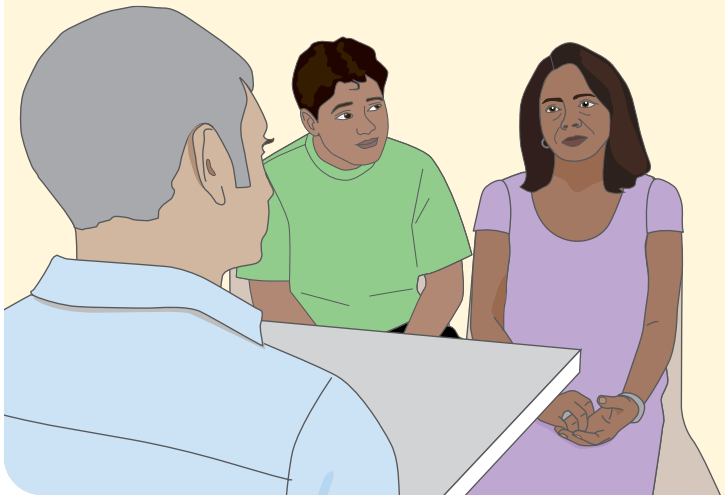
EASY READ

What is chemotherapy?



Visit our website: connect.cancer.org.au/easy-read

Introduction



This information is about cancer and treatment.

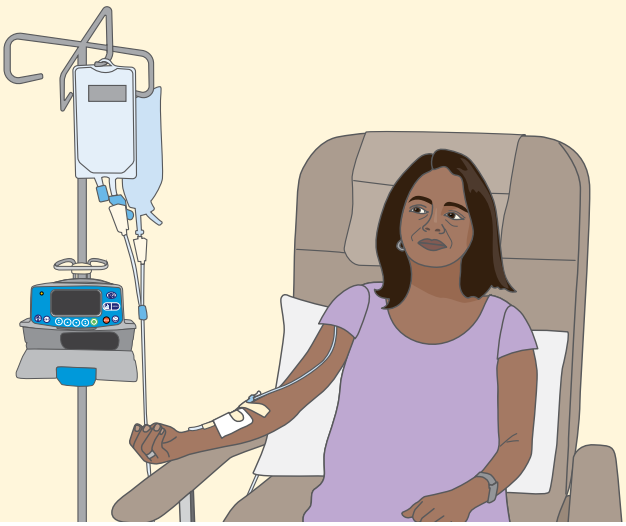


You can ask someone for help to read this information.



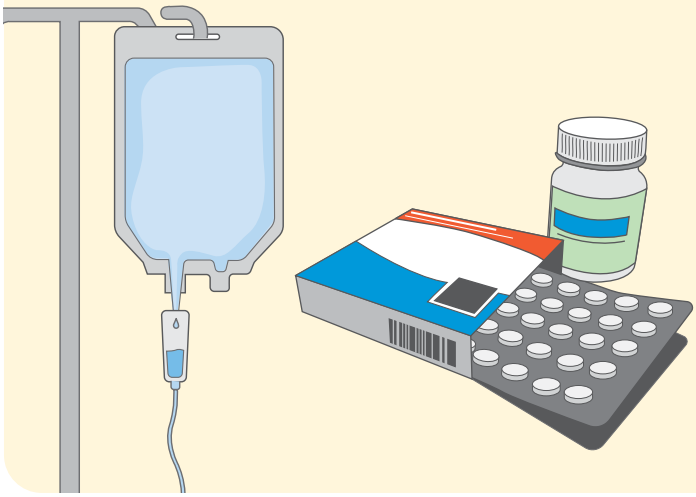
Having **chemotherapy** can feel scary. You can ask your doctor questions about anything you do not understand.

What is chemotherapy?

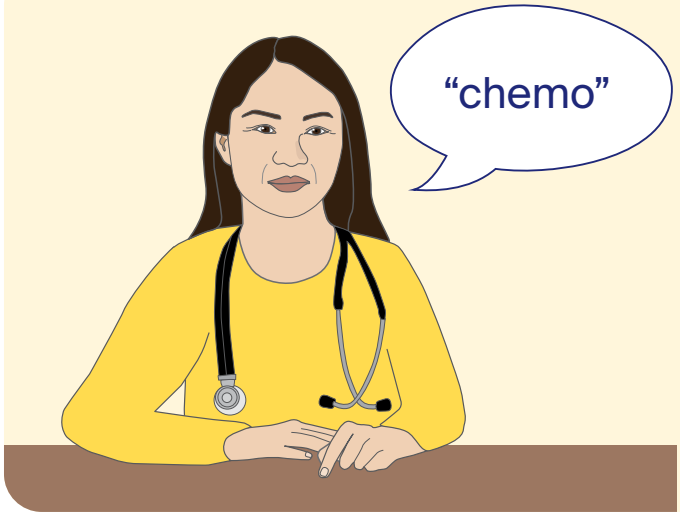


This fact sheet is about **chemotherapy.**

Chemotherapy is treatment for cancer.

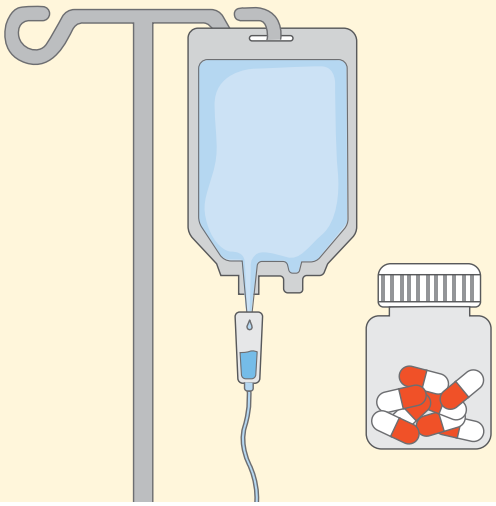


Chemotherapy uses strong medicines to kill cancer.

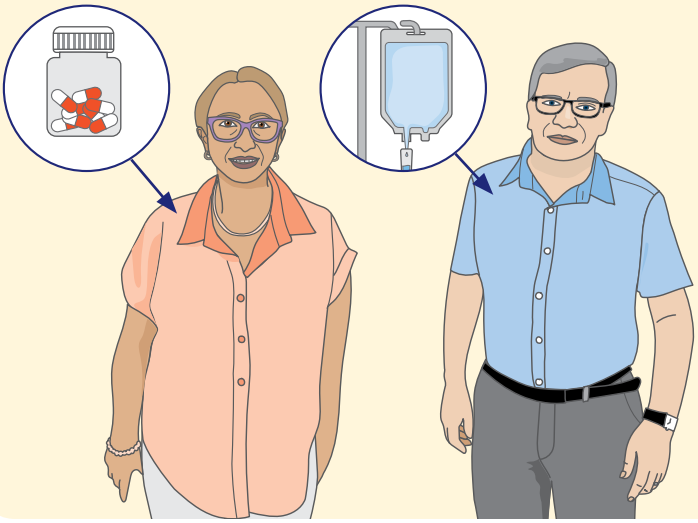


The word **‘chemo’** also means chemotherapy.

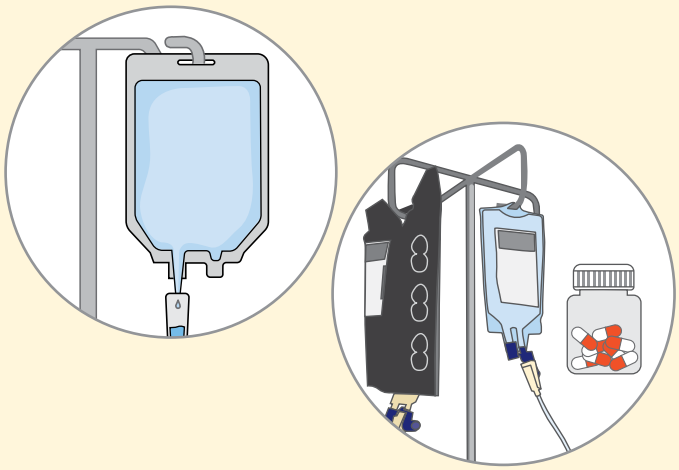
How you get chemotherapy



There are many kinds of chemotherapy medicines.

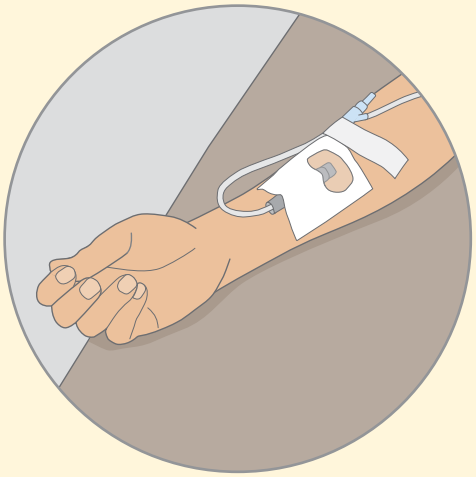


Each person has different medicines. This is because some medicines work better for some types of cancer.



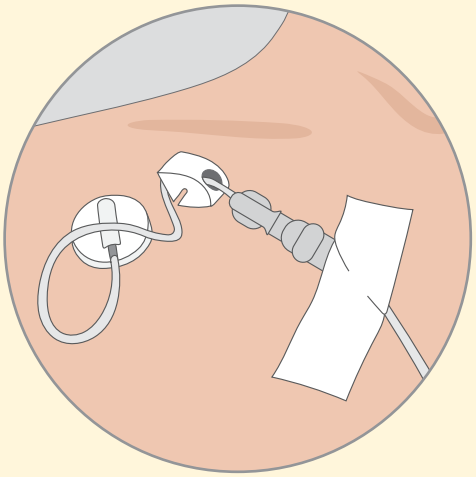
You may have one medicine or several medicines.

How you have chemotherapy



There are different ways to have chemotherapy.

One way is through a vein in your arm. We call this **intravenous (IV) chemotherapy.**



Sometimes you have chemotherapy through a vein in your chest.

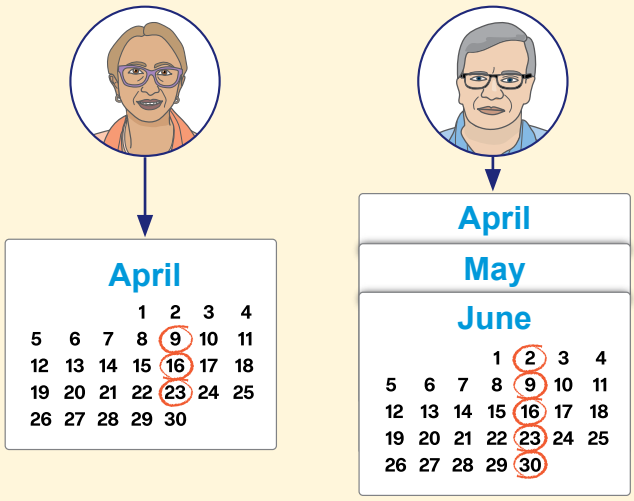


You may also have chemotherapy as tablets that you swallow.

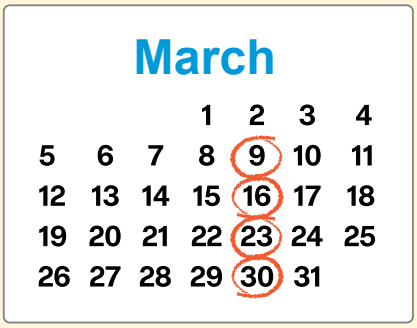
Where you have chemotherapy



You usually go to the hospital or treatment centre for chemotherapy.



You may have treatment for a few weeks or a few months. This will depend on the chemotherapy medicines you are having.

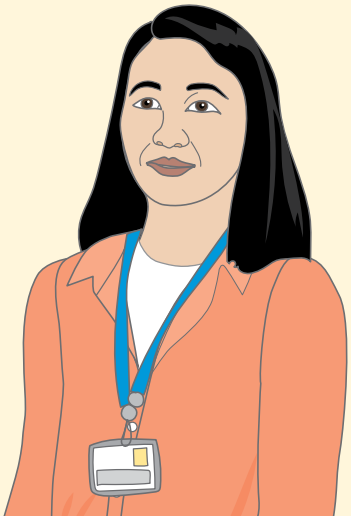


Your medical oncologist will tell you how many times you will have chemotherapy.

During chemotherapy



Different **health professionals** will look after you.

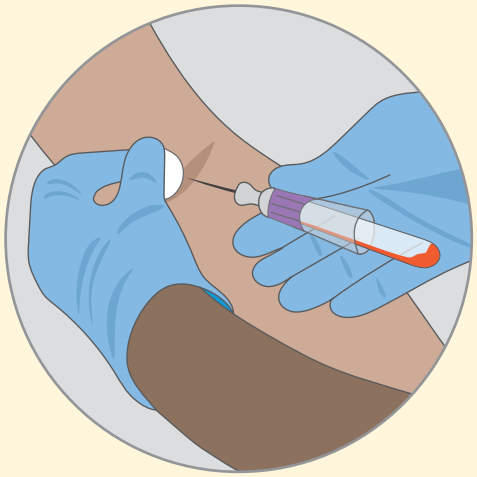


A doctor called a **medical oncologist** plans the chemotherapy.



A chemotherapy **nurse** will give you the chemotherapy medicines.

Having chemotherapy



You will have a blood test before you start chemotherapy. They take blood using a small needle.



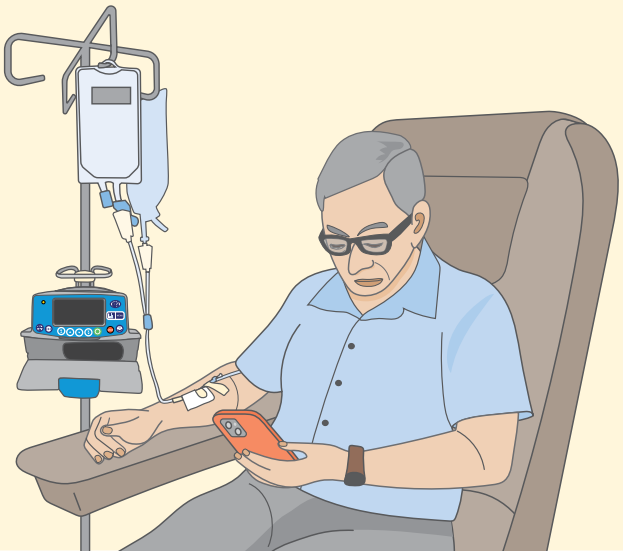
Having a blood test and having chemotherapy will not hurt.



You sit in a comfortable chair and wear your own clothes.



It can take a few minutes or a few hours to have chemotherapy. It is different for everyone.



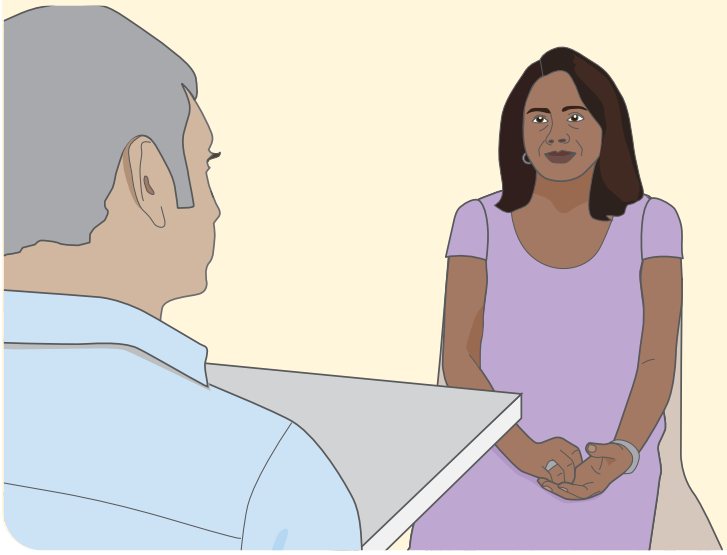
Having chemotherapy can be boring. You can listen to music, read or play a game on your phone.



You can bring someone with you.



You can usually go home on the same day.



Your doctor will keep checking to see how the treatment is working. Sometimes they might change your treatment.

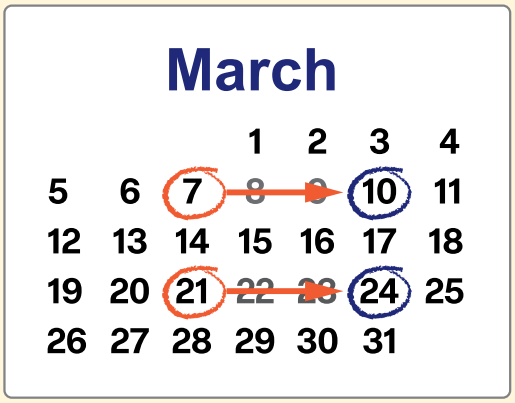
Side effects



Some people feel sick when they have chemotherapy. We call this a **side effect.**



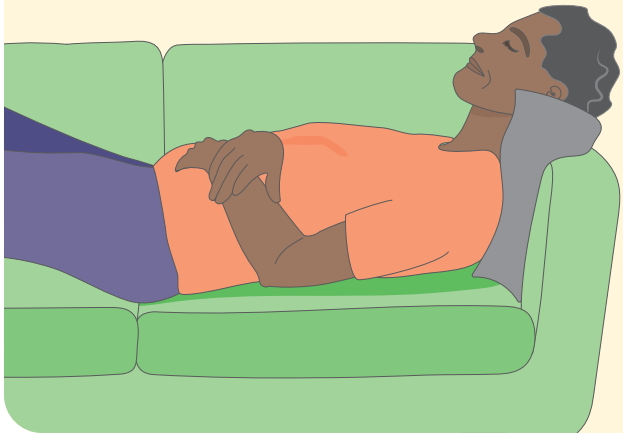
Most people do not get all the side effects.



Side effects usually start a few days after you have chemotherapy.



The doctor will talk to you about side effects. They can suggest ways you can feel better.



Chemotherapy may make you feel very tired.



Some chemotherapy drugs make it hard to poo. We call this **constipation.**



You may have runny poo. We call this **diarrhoea.**



Chemotherapy might make you feel like vomiting. We call this **nausea.**



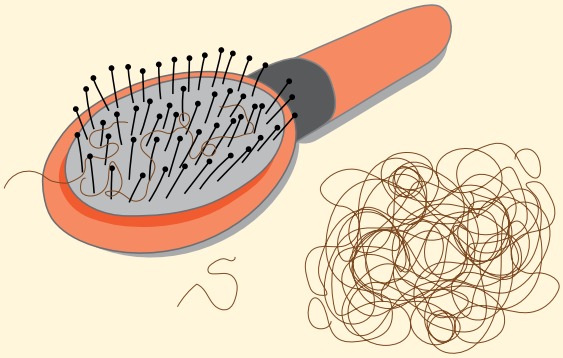
You might get sores in your mouth.



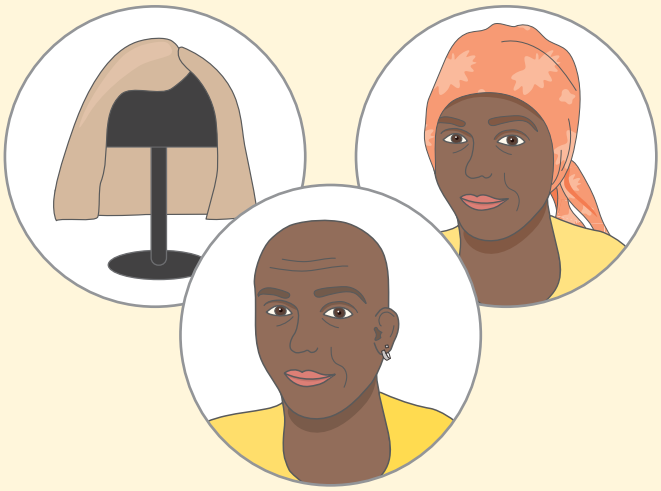
Food may taste different. You may not enjoy eating as much.



Some chemotherapy medicines do not change your hair very much.

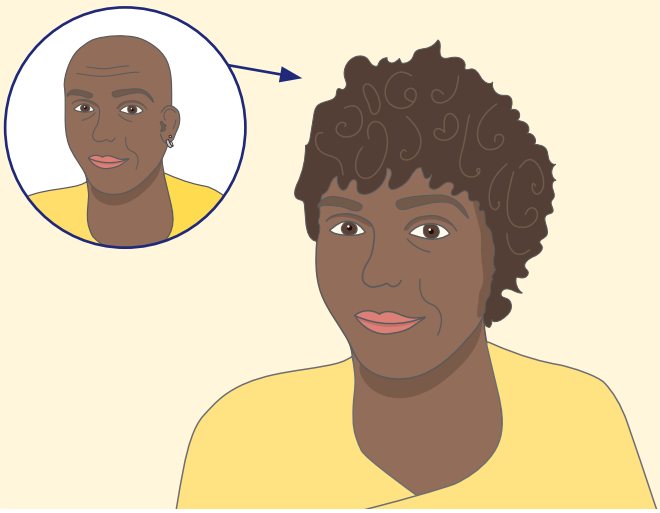


Some chemotherapy medicines make your hair fall out.



If your hair falls out, you can:

- wear a wig
- wear a headscarf
- leave your head uncovered.



Your hair will grow back when you stop chemotherapy.



You may find it hard to focus and remember things.

We call this **chemo brain** or **brain fog.**



Chemotherapy may make it more likely to get a cold or flu.



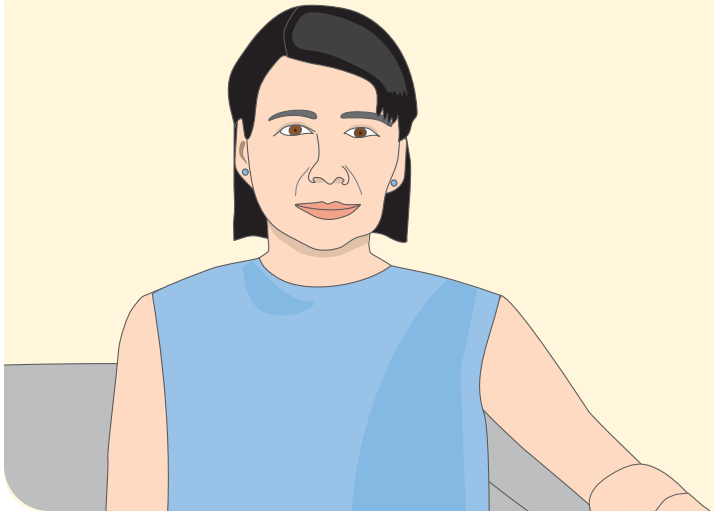
If your temperature goes over 38°C, you have a fever.



If you have a fever, call your cancer treatment team.

If you feel very unwell, call **000** for an ambulance. The ambulance will take you to hospital.

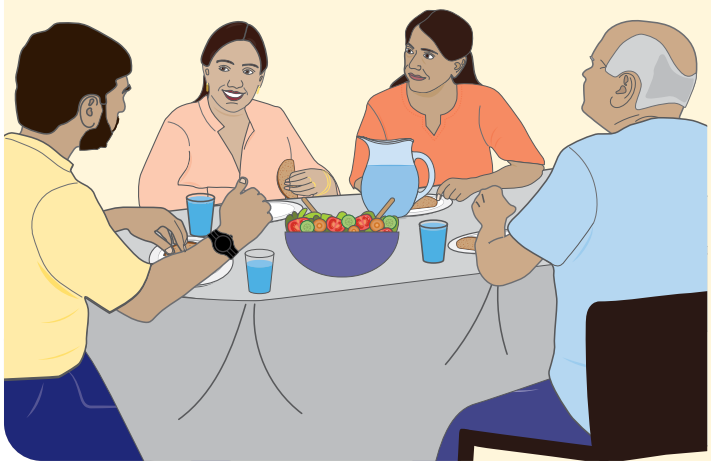
Coping with side effects



It might take a few weeks or months for side effects to stop.



Exercise and eating healthy food can help you feel better.



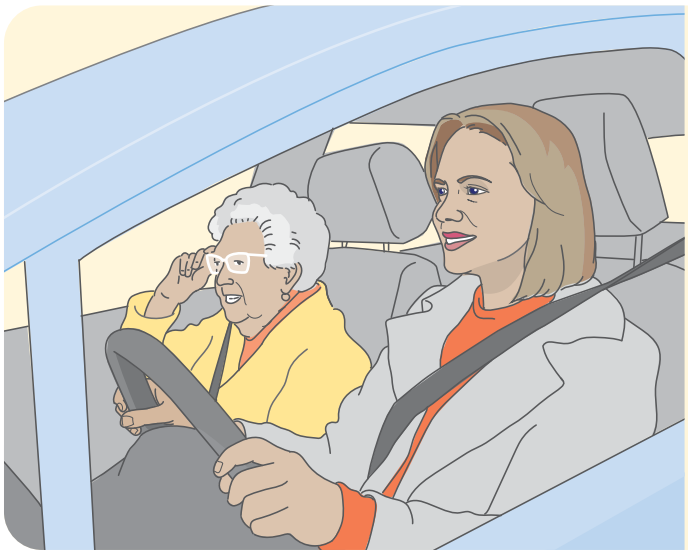
You might worry about cancer and side effects. You can talk to:

- a doctor
- your family or friends
- a counsellor.

For family, friends and carers



Family and friends can help people with cancer in different ways.



You can:

- help with daily tasks
- go to appointments
- listen and offer support.

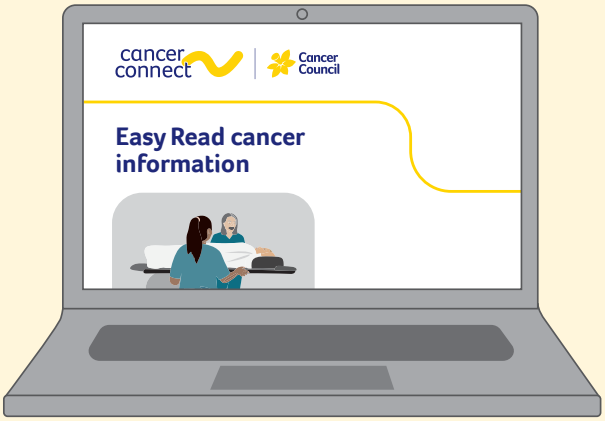


You can ask for help too. Call **Cancer Connect on 13 11 20** to find out about help for carers.

How Cancer Connect can help you



You can speak to us on the phone. We can help you find free cancer information and support. Call Cancer Connect on **13 11 20** Monday to Friday.



You can find fact sheets like this one at our website **connect.cancer.org.au/easy-read.**



We also have:

- booklets and fact sheets
- information in other languages.

You can call **Cancer Connect on 13 11 20** for information and support.

Visit the Cancer Connect website. We have information on cancer, treatment and support. Scan this QR code or go to **connect.cancer.org.au/easy-read.**

If you need information in a language other than English, an interpreting service is available. Call **131 450.**

If you are Deaf or find it hard to hear or speak to hearing people on the phone, you can contact us through the National Relay Service (NRS). **accesshub.gov.au**

Easy Read fact sheet: *What is chemotherapy?*
This information was reviewed by health professionals, other experts, and people affected by cancer. To see a list of reviewers, visit our website **connect.cancer.org.au/easy-read.**

Words: Jenny Mothoneos. Design and illustrations: Caen Clasby, Eleonora Pelosi and Ali Wright, with support from Tracey Nearhos.

This fact sheet is part of a series of Easy Read resources. Cancer Council also has a longer booklet called *Understanding Chemotherapy.*

Note to reader
Always consult your doctor about matters that affect your health. This fact sheet is intended as a general introduction and is not a substitute for professional medical, legal or financial advice. Information about cancer is constantly being updated and revised by the medical and research communities. While all care is taken to ensure accuracy at the time of publication, Cancer Council Australia and its members exclude all liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred by use of or reliance on the information provided in this fact sheet.

This fact sheet is funded through the generosity of the people of Australia. To make a donation and help change the future of cancer, visit **cancerconnect.org.au** or call **13 11 20.**

Cancer Council acknowledges Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to Elders past and present.

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