

## What is Chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy refers to a drug treatment that destroys fast-growing cells in your body and is most commonly used in the treatment of cancers.

## When is Chemotherapy recommended?

Chemotherapy is used in a variety of situations including the following:

- As the primary and sole treatment of cancer.
- As an additional treatment for cancer such as before or after surgery, or in combination with radiotherapy.
- To ease the signs and symptoms of cancer.
- Chemotherapy is often used to prepare for a stem cell transplant by eliminating the underlying disease in the bone marrow before the stem cells are infused.
- Chemotherapy can also be used in non cancer conditions such as immunological disorders. For example, in rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, lower doses of chemotherapy are used to control an overactive immune system.

## What are the side effects of Chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy works by attacking cancer cells. During the process, other normal fast growing cells are affected and this is often what causes many of the side effects of chemotherapy.

The common side effects include:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Hair loss
- Diarrhoea
- Loss of appetite
- Ulcers in the mouth
- Fever
- Easy bruising and bleeding
- Constipation
- Fatigue

## How to prepare for a Chemotherapy session?

### Preparation for Chemotherapy



			
<p><b>Blood Tests &amp; Investigations</b></p> <p>Baseline blood tests are taken to assess your blood, kidney and liver function. Investigations such as a heart scan and lung function test may be done depending on your health.</p>	<p><b>Dietary Assessment</b></p> <p>It is important to maintain adequate nutrition during your treatment. A dietary assessment is offered to all patients prior to the commencement of chemotherapy.</p>	<p><b>Fertility Preservation</b></p> <p>In patients of childbearing age, fertility preservation such as sperm banking or egg harvesting is offered in cases where chemotherapy may affect your fertility.</p>	<p><b>Line Insertion</b></p> <p>A line may be inserted through which your chemotherapy will be given. A PICC line is normally used, but sometimes a Hickman line or port-a-cath is inserted</p>

Before you start chemotherapy, the doctor will determine that you are fit for chemotherapy. Blood tests and certain investigations such as an echocardiogram (heart scan) or lung function tests may be done. In addition, a dietary assessment is offered to ensure that you maintain good nutrition during the course of your treatment. Some chemotherapy drugs may affect your fertility, and the doctor will discuss with you whether sperm banking or egg preservation may be suitable. More than half of patients will require insertion of a temporary catheter through which the chemotherapy will be given. Generally we use PICC lines at CFCH, but occasionally a Hickman line or a port-a-cath is inserted.

## What can you expect during a Chemotherapy session?

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- Our haematologist will discuss with you the most appropriate chemotherapy drugs to be administered depending on the type of cancer and its severity.
- Previous cancer treatments are taken into consideration for choosing the most effective chemotherapeutic drugs for a particular patient.
- Depending on the type, stage of cancer, and the extent of spread, our doctor will plan the course of your chemotherapy. Chemotherapy treatments tend to be given in cycles. Each cycle typically lasts up to a month with periods of rest in between for you to recover.
- Chemotherapy is usually administered in our clinic as an outpatient. Some patients require hospital admission for chemotherapy if there are any serious side effects, if a patient is frail, or if treatment is prolonged.

## How is Chemotherapy given?

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Chemotherapy drugs can be administered in different ways including:

### Chemotherapy infusion

Chemotherapy is usually given intravenously as an infusion into a vein.

### Oral chemotherapy

Some chemotherapy medications can be taken orally in the form of pills or capsules.

### Chemotherapy injections

Chemotherapy drugs can be given as an injection under the skin.

### Chemotherapy drugs to treat one area

In some cases, chemotherapy drugs are administered directly into a specific part of the body. In blood cancers, chemotherapy is sometimes given intrathecally (via the spine) into the central nervous system.

## Chemotherapy at CFCH

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At CFCH, our haematologists will tailor your chemotherapy regimen based on the latest guidance and research as well as their extensive experience. You will be monitored closely during your course of treatment for side effects, and tests are done to assess how you are responding to treatment. Our doctors and team of nurses strive to ensure that you are fully involved and informed of your treatment and that you are as comfortable as possible during your treatment period.

*Disclaimer:*

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