

You and your health care provider... Managing cancer



Talk with your health care provider about cancer

You and your health care provider may have already talked in detail about managing the kind of cancer you have. It is important to follow your treatment plan. By doing so, you may lessen the side effects of treatment and improve your well-being.

What is adherence?

Adherence means that you take an active role in managing your health. It means talking with your health care provider, setting goals, and following your treatment plan, including taking medication as prescribed by your health care provider.

Form a partnership with your health care provider

The **PRESCRIPTION FOR HEALTH** program can help you take an active part in your treatment. It all starts with a special partnership between you and your health care provider. Together you can:

- Share information
- Explore treatment choices
- Agree on the best treatment plan for you
- Take action to help you follow your plan
- Keep track of the results of your adherence

Keep in mind that the better you follow your treatment plan, the better it can work for you.

**Take your medicine the right way.
It will help you get the most out of your treatment.**

You may want to know...

What is cancer?

- Cancer is when cells grow out of control in a part of the body. These cells are not normal cells. They grow quickly and outlive normal cells¹

What causes cancer?

- Many times the cause is not known. Sometimes it is caused by things people do. This can include smoking and drinking a lot of alcohol. Your family history may also put you at higher risk²

Cancer medicines have side effects.

- Fatigue, nausea, and hair loss can occur. If they do, talk with your health care provider. There are ways you can cope. There may also be ways to reduce side effects³

You should avoid people with a cold or the flu.

- Some cancer medicines can put stress on the immune system. It is important to keep away from germs while on treatment⁴

Cost should not keep you from getting the medicine you need.

- Cancer medicines can cost a lot. Your health care provider's office can help you with insurance questions.⁵ They may also be able to suggest medicine assistance programs

A medicine diary can help.

- Keep a record of your medicines and how you are feeling. Bring it to office visits. Take notes when your health care provider gives you directions

The partnership between you and your health care provider can help you reach your health goals.

- Your health care provider will work with you to find the best plan and will adjust it over the long term



Remember to take your medicine

Try these tips to help you take your medicine the right way:

- Take your medicine at the same time every day. Link it to something you do each day, like brushing your teeth
- Put a reminder note by the refrigerator, phone, or medicine cabinet. Use different colors to make it stand out
- Keep a chart or calendar showing when you take your medicine. Use colored pens to keep track of medicines
- Use a pillbox to keep track of pills
- Ask for help. Friends and family can provide support. Put together a team
- Program your computer with a start-up reminder to take your medicine. Sign up with a free e-mail service to send reminders
- Use a calendar to remember order refills. Place your order 3 to 4 days before your medicine is due to run out. Allow more time if you order by mail
- Write down any directions that your health care provider or pharmacist gives you
- Do not change your dose or how often you take your medicine without talking with your health care provider

Ways to help manage cancer

- Team up with your health care provider to develop a treatment plan
- Set goals that you can reach
- Follow your treatment plan
- Ask questions and talk about concerns

Resources

American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

National Cancer Institute
www.cancer.gov

National Institutes of Health
www.health.nih.gov

References

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5. American Cancer Society. Health insurance and financial assistance for the cancer patient. http://www.cancer.org/docroot/MIT/content/MIT_3_2x_Medical_Insurance_and_Financial_Assistance_for_the_Cancer_Patient.asp? Accessed November 5, 2009.

