



## Preparing for Your First Day of Chemotherapy

Days in the chemotherapy infusion suite are often long. It is best to be prepared for this, which will help to ease the stress and anxiety that comes with being treated for cancer. Below are some suggestions for making your first day of chemotherapy as stress free as possible. Decide which tips will work best for you on the days you spend in the infusion suite.

### Organize your Information

On your first day of treatment you will encounter a lot of new, possibly overwhelming, experiences. It's a good idea to have information prepared for the questions you may be asked. You can use the [OncoPilot](#) section to print out logs to organize your information. Putting these forms into a binder that can travel with you to appointments is a good way to keep organized going forward.

### Plan how you will get there

Because you don't know how your body will react to the different medications, it is a good idea to have someone drive you to and from treatment, at least the first time. You may find that you tolerate it well and can come alone for future visits if you prefer. It is best to familiarize yourself with directions to the cancer center, where to park and where to sign in upon arrival.

### What to expect upon arrival

Arrive on time for your appointment. You may need to fill out paperwork and you will likely have blood work drawn prior to your treatment. The results of this blood work may influence your treatment, so there will likely be a delay after the blood is drawn while the team awaits the results. You will also need to wait for the pharmacist to mix the medication.

### Dress comfortably

You may be sitting in the treatment area for an extended period of time, so it is important to be comfortable. Ensure that there is easy access to your central line, if you have one. A PICC in your arm will require the nurse to have access to your upper arm. If you are wearing a top with long sleeves make sure the sleeves are loose enough to be pulled up past your PICC line. If you have a port-a-cath in your chest that will be accessed for your treatment you want to wear a top with a loose fitting neck line or you can pull your shirt up while it is being accessed and then put your shirt back down once you are attached to your treatment. Most treatment areas are cold, so bringing a blanket is a good option since you will be attached to your chemotherapy infusion making removing and adding clothing difficult.

You may also want to bring a lip balm or lotion with you to keep your skin hydrated. Avoid perfume and cologne since your sense of smell and that of those around you may be very sensitive.

### Bring a snack

Unless indicated by your provider or nurse, there is no reason why you can't have a snack or drink during your treatment. It is important to maintain proper nutrition and to stay hydrated. You may want to pick a snack that is high in nutritional value and somewhat bland in smell and taste. Some infusion suites are open, meaning that there is more than one patient being treated in the room, so you want to be mindful to exclude any foods that have a strong odor to them. Some good snack ideas include: nuts, whole grain crackers, hard cheese, hummus, granola bars and fruit. Most treatment centers will provide water.

### Entertainment

Most infusion suites allow for a visitor to stay with you during your treatment. A family member or friend can be a great distraction and it is also helpful to have someone else with you who can take in the information given to you. You can also bring a book, electronic device, craft, etc. Some infusion suites have a television. Bring anything with you that will help you pass the time.

## Ask questions

No question is a bad question! Medical staff are there to answer your questions. You can ask your nurse for handouts about each medication you are being given. If you brought a support person with you, make sure they are there when you are asking questions so that you have a second set of ears to absorb the information. If you haven't already you can use OncoLink's "[Build My Treatment Binder](#)" for information about your treatment course and managing side effects.

## Going home

When you are done your first day of chemotherapy you may be emotional, exhausted, overwhelmed or ecstatic. You won't know exactly what to expect until you are living it. Once you are home, it is important to follow any instructions given to you. Take your medications on time, rest, hydrate, and eat. Keep track of any side effects or new feelings you have to report back to your provider. Keep a list of questions that come up to bring to your next visit.

If you develop nausea, diarrhea or other side effects, call your provider. They can't help you if they don't know it is going on! There are many tips and medications for managing the side effects of cancer treatment and your provider can help you determine what works best for you.

Take time to reflect on what worked best for you while at your appointment. Did you pick a snack that you actually wanted to eat? Did you receive adequate support from your support person? Did you have all the information you needed with you? Did you receive adequate teaching information about your treatment and medications from your nurse? These are some things to think about for future chemotherapy treatments.

Keep in mind that everyone's disease process and treatment is unique. Many people will want to give you advice and it is your job to take the advice that works for you and leave the rest behind.

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