

## **DEALING WITH THE SIDE EFFECTS OF CANCER TREATMENTS**

Breast Cancer Options 2017 Healthy Lifestyles Calendar

**WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF BREAST CANCER TREATMENTS** -The side effects you experience will depend on the type, location, and extent of your breast cancer and the treatment you receive. Side effects are very individual and may not be the same for two people with similar diagnoses that are receiving the same treatment. They may vary from one treatment session to the next. Some of these side effects may show up immediately and go away when treatment stops and some may continue after you are finished with treatment. Some may show up long after treatment has stopped.

**MANAGING FATIGUE FROM CHEMOTHERAPY AND RADIATION:** The best remedy for fatigue is exercise. This has been shown in research studies. It is really important to make sure there are no underlying medical issues going on that may be adding to the fatigue, such as anemia, iron deficiency or low thyroid function. Most often there are not any of these causes, and it is just "cancer-related fatigue" from the treatment. The main difference between cancer-related fatigue and just being tired is that you DO NOT feel better after getting more rest. Do a minimum of three hours of exercise a week, and if you can, five to six hours a week. Almost any type of exercise will help. Yoga to be particularly useful because it also tackles issues like concentration and stretching. You can even do yoga at home with a video or DVD if getting to a class is a problem or not desired.

**FASTING:** A study at USC found that breast cancer survivors, who reported consistently not eating for 13 hours or more (overnight), had a 36% lower risk of having a breast cancer recurrence and 21% lower risk of dying from their breast cancer. Longer fasting (for at least 72 hours prior to chemotherapy) improved effectiveness and reduced the side-effects of chemotherapy. Fasting reduces plasma glucose, IGF-1 and insulin levels and produces a state of ketosis which clearly has health benefits, one of those being to deprive cancer cells of nutrients. Normal but not cancer cells are protected against high-dose chemotherapy. The research team also found that 72 hours of fasting is associated with lower side effects, compared with fasting for 24 hours. This raises the possibility that a doctor-monitored, fasting-like diet could bolster the effectiveness of immunotherapy on a wider range of cancers.

**HAND-FOOT SYNDROME** is the result of chemotherapy or biologic drugs leaking into the capillaries of your outer extremities, like the palms of your hands or the soles of your feet. It can cause irritating symptoms like redness, pain and tenderness. Dryness and cracking may occur in areas, in addition to a numbing or tingling sensation. Wearing cold gloves and slippers decreases the blood flow to the tissues, thereby diminishing the amount of chemotherapy reaching nerves in the hands and feet during an infusion session. To be effective, the gloves and slippers need to be worn immediately before and during the entire chemotherapy infusion session. Gloves and socks were changed every 15- 30 minutes to keep hands and feet cold. Cold gloves and socks reduced the toxicity of chemotherapy to skin, nails and nerves. Studies are ongoing.

**MOUTH SORES-** Many chemotherapy agents cause the lining of the mouth and digestive tract to slough off and become raw and tender. Even in use in hospital settings

today is L-Glutamine, an amino acid that helps repair the lining. With mouth sores I recommend a gargle and for all patients I recommend oral capsules or powder mixed into water or juice. Oral glutamine reduces the duration and severity of stomatitis after cytotoxic cancer chemotherapy. Studies show that the duration of mouth pain was 4.5 days less in chemotherapy courses in which glutamine supplementation was compared with placebo.

**CHEMOBRAIN:** Chemobrain," can affect up to 35% of post-treatment breast cancer patients. Post-treatment, the common mental "fogginess" known as chemobrain can prevent them from staying organized and completing everyday activities, such as sticking to a schedule, planning a family gathering, or remembering where they left the car keys.

A research study that assigned women to either early or delayed treatment was done with a 5-week, 2-hour group training session. In the session, a psychologist taught them strategies to help them with their memory and maintaining their ability to pay attention to things. Women in the early intervention group reported improved memory and test functioning compared with those in the delayed intervention group and showed continued improvement 2 months after completion of the rehabilitation program. The brain wave pattern in the intervention group actually normalized.

**NAUSEA:** For nausea, both ginger and/or caraway seed can often help.

Ginger: To prevent nausea, hold a slice of fresh ginger in your mouth while undergoing therapy; if you become nauseous, chew on it. Acupuncture or an acupressure wrist band may also help. Simmer a tablespoon of grated fresh ginger or several slices of fresh ginger root in 2 cups of hot water for five minutes. You can add caraway seeds if you like. Caraway seed tea can be used after radiation treatment. It is helpful for digestive problems including heartburn, bloating and gas. Pour a cup of hot water over 1 teaspoon seeds. Steep for 10 minutes.