

## **Chemotherapy and Prostate Cancer**

**The following information is based on the general experiences of many prostate cancer patients. Your experience may be different. If you have any questions about what prostate cancer treatment services are covered by your health insurance, please contact your health care provider or health insurance provider.**

**This education material was made possible by a Grant from the California Department of Justice, Antitrust Law Section, from litigation settlement funds to benefit Californians diagnosed with cancer or their families.**

**Please feel free to read only those parts of the booklet you need now. You don't need to read everything right now. You can always read more later.**

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## What Will I Learn By Reading This Booklet?

You and your doctor are talking about **chemotherapy** (key-mo-ther-a-pee) as a way to control your prostate cancer. To help you get ready for chemotherapy, it is important for you to learn as much about this kind of treatment as possible. It is also important to learn how to manage the side effects (unwanted changes in your body) you may have from chemotherapy. In this booklet you will learn:

- What chemotherapy is
- Why you may need chemotherapy
- How chemotherapy works
- Ways to get chemotherapy
- What to expect when you have chemotherapy

It is important for you to learn how chemotherapy will affect your life during your treatment if you and your doctor decide that chemotherapy is the best way to manage your prostate cancer.

Words that appear in **bold** (dark text) can be found in the “Key Words” section at the end of this booklet.

## **What Is Chemotherapy?**

When you have chemotherapy, you are given powerful **anticancer** medicines that kill many of your prostate cancer cells. Chemotherapy treats your whole body, not just one area, like surgery or radiation therapy. The chemotherapy medicines you are given travel throughout your whole body.

## **Why Would I Need Chemotherapy?**

Prostate cancer can **recur** or come back after several months, a few years, or many years. It can recur after any treatment option you have chosen.

### **Recurrence after Surgery**

If you had surgery, you may ask how you can have prostate cancer if your prostate gland was taken out. This recurrence may have happened because some of the prostate cancer cells moved outside your prostate gland before it was taken out. These prostate cancer cells may not have been found because they were too small or there were not enough of them to be found. These prostate cancer cells then started to grow in the area where your prostate gland used to be or in another part of your body. When prostate cancer cells spread to other parts of the body it is called **metastasis** (muh-tas-tuh-siz).

### **Recurrence after Radiation Therapy**

**Radiation therapy** uses high-energy rays, such as x-rays, to kill cancer cells in your prostate. While the high-energy rays are focused on your cancer cells, they may not have killed all of the cancer cells in your prostate gland. If all of the prostate cancer cells are not killed, they can move outside your prostate gland and start growing nearby or in other parts of your body.

## **Recurrence with Hormone Therapy**

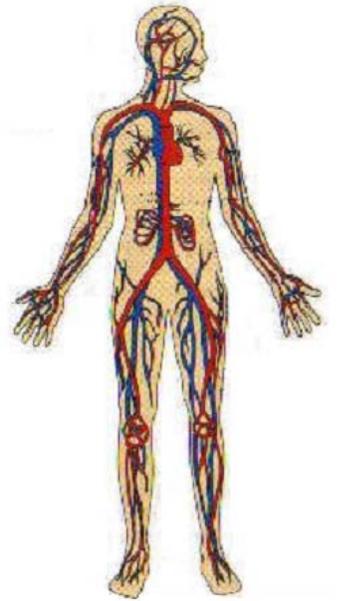
**Hormone therapy** shrinks your prostate cancer and kills many, but not all of your prostate cancer cells. Hormone therapy does not cure prostate cancer. It lowers the amount of **testosterone** in your body, which makes it harder for prostate cancer cells to grow. Testosterone is a hormone that makes you grow hair on your face and body, have a man's body shape, and controls your desire for sex. After taking hormones to control your prostate cancer for a period of time, sometimes a number of years, your prostate cancer cells may change. This change lets them grow in your body even if you have no testosterone. When this happens it is called **hormone refractory (ri-frak-tuh-ree) prostate cancer**. This means that some of your prostate cancer cells may start to grow even though you are on hormone therapy.

## How May Prostate Cancer Spread Through My Body?

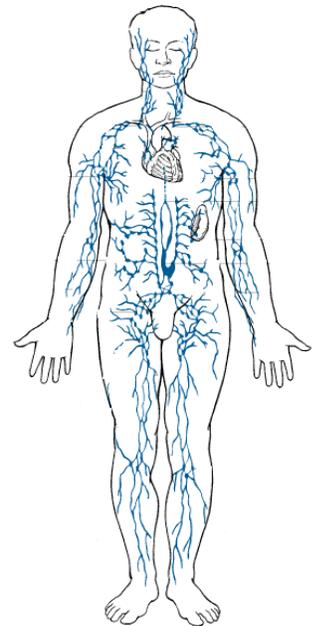
Prostate cancer cells spread through your body in three ways:

1. Through your **circulatory** (sur-kyuh-luh-tohr-ee) system or blood stream. When prostate cancer cells enter your blood stream, they travel all over your body. The prostate cancer cells come to rest in another part of your body where they can start to grow.
2. Through your **lymphatic (lim-fat-ik) or lymph system**. Your lymph system helps you fight infection and balance the amount of fluid in your body. There are many lymph nodes around your prostate gland. The lymph nodes take a fluid called lymph to different parts of your body. Prostate cancer cells can enter your lymph system through your lymph nodes. This lets your prostate cancer cells move to other parts of your body where they can start to grow.
3. Your prostate cancer may move to the areas around your prostate gland.

When prostate cancer cells start to grow in another part of your body, you have **metastatic (met-uh-stat-ik)** prostate cancer.



**Your circulatory system**



**Your lymphatic system**

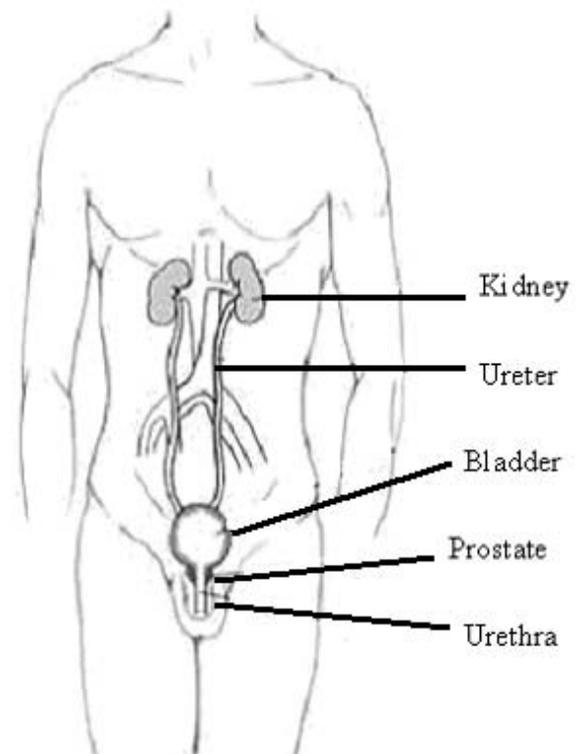
## Where Is My Prostate Cancer Likely To Spread In My Body?

Your prostate cancer may spread to several places in your body.

- The most common places your prostate cancer will spread are to your bones.

The bones most often affected when prostate cancer spreads will be in your lower and upper back, hips, upper legs and ribs. If this happens you may have pain in those areas of your body. Remember, if you have pain, it can be controlled. Speak with your doctor or health care team if you have pain.

- Another area where prostate cancer can spread is to the areas near your prostate gland, including the **ureters** (yoo-ri-ters), the tubes that carry urine from your kidneys to your bladder. If this happens, your **kidneys** may become blocked. The prostate cancer may also spread to the **urethra** (yoo-ree-thruh), the tube that carries urine from your bladder out through your penis. If this happens, you may have problems **urinating** (peeing).



**Your urinary system**

- And, in very rare cases, it may spread to your liver. If this happens, you may find that you are not as hungry as usual. You may be more tired or weak. You may have pain in your stomach area. Your legs and feet may become swollen. And your body will not be able to handle alcoholic drinks.

There are ways you can work with your doctor and health care team to take care of the problems you may have if your prostate cancer spreads to other areas of your body. The goal is to take care of your pain or any other problems you have so that you may continue doing your daily activities as well as you are able. If you have any problems, talk to your doctor or health care team.

## **How You Might Feel If Your Prostate Cancer Returns**

It is very hard to hear that you have prostate cancer again when you have already had treatment. The return of your prostate cancer may be something that you and those close to you have worried about since you were first diagnosed. You may feel that you have been through enough and that it is unfair that your prostate cancer has come back. For some people this can make having prostate cancer again harder than it was the first time. However, it is important for you to remember that there are treatments you can get that can help you. Your doctor and your health care team are there to help you choose what will be best for you. They will also help you deal with the challenge of having prostate cancer, again.

## How Does Chemotherapy Work?

Healthy cells in your body **divide** and grow. Each cell divides in half to make another cell just like itself. Cancer cells do not divide and grow, as they should. Instead of making just one cell like itself, the cancer cell makes many copies of itself. After a while, your body becomes overworked because of all the cancer cells. Chemotherapy medicine keeps cancer cells from copying themselves. By killing the cancer cells, chemotherapy medicine tries to keep the cancer from moving to other parts of your body.



## **Will Chemotherapy Cure My Prostate Cancer?**

No, chemotherapy will not cure your prostate cancer, because it does not kill all of your prostate cancer cells. But chemotherapy helps control your prostate cancer.

It may:

1. Slow the growth of your prostate cancer by killing cancer cells that may have moved to other parts of your body.
2. Shrink your prostate cancer.
3. Lower the amount of pain you have so you can live more comfortably.

## How Is Chemotherapy Given?

You can get chemotherapy in two different ways. Some of the anticancer medicines are given to you **intravenously** (in-truh-vee-nuhs-lee) which is also known as an I.V. This means that the medicines go into your body through a needle in your vein. Other chemotherapy medicines can be taken by mouth or **orally**. Sometimes two or more chemotherapy medicines will be given to you at the same time. This treatment may work better at killing your prostate cancer cells.

You may need many blood tests before, during, and after getting chemotherapy. These blood tests tell your doctor how your body is doing. When you have a blood test, a nurse or technician will take a small amount of blood from your arm with a needle. The tests can tell your doctor how the healthy cells in your body are doing.

This is important for your doctor to know in deciding on your chemotherapy dose (or amount). Blood tests may also tell the doctor how well the chemotherapy is controlling your cancer.



**Getting a blood test**

## Getting Ready For Chemotherapy

- What tests has your doctor told you that you need to have before you start your chemotherapy? List them here.

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- When are your appointments for these tests? List the day(s) and time(s) of your appointments.

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- Where do you need to go to have these tests? List the places where you need to go for your tests.

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- What transportation plans will you make to get to these places? If you need help, speak with your doctor or health care team.

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## **Getting Chemotherapy Through An I.V.**

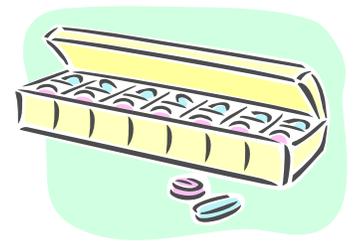
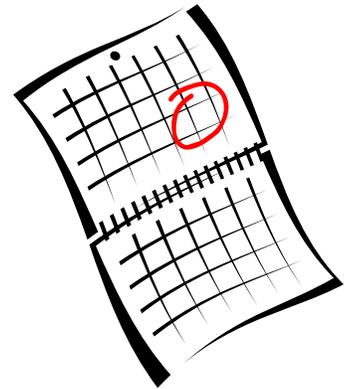
If you are getting chemotherapy medicines that are given through an I.V. (or intravenously), you will go to a clinic on the day you are scheduled to have your chemotherapy. If your blood test shows that you can get your chemotherapy, a chemotherapy nurse will start you on an I.V. A thin needle is carefully placed into one of the veins in your arm or in the back of your hand. The needle will be taken out of your arm when your chemotherapy treatment is finished. This needle will be connected to two bags of liquid by a small tube. One bag contains your chemotherapy medicine. The second bag contains a fluid that will be used: 1) to wash all the chemotherapy medicine out of the tubing and into your body and 2) to make sure that you have fluid going into your vein until the nurse removes the needle. This extra fluid will help you feel better during your treatment. The chemotherapy nurse will give the medicine to you slowly through the I.V. Everything will probably go well during your treatment. If you have a problem during your treatment, there will be a nurse nearby who will check on you while you get your chemotherapy. Do not be afraid to tell the nurse if you do not feel good or if your arm starts to hurt at the place where the needle goes into your vein.



**Getting chemotherapy through an I.V.**

## Getting Chemotherapy By Mouth Or Orally

If you are taking chemotherapy by mouth (orally) the medicine is given to you in a pill, capsule or liquid form. You will swallow the medicine just like many other medicines you may take. If you are taking chemotherapy by mouth, make sure that you take them exactly as you are told. It is important that you do not skip a time when you are supposed to take your medicine. Also, do not stop taking your medicine unless you speak with your doctor. It may help you to keep track of when you need to take your medicine by using a calendar with the dates marked to show when you need to take it. If you are taking pills or capsules, some men find it helpful to use a pillbox that has spaces in it with different times of the day. You can fill the pillbox with your chemotherapy medicine so that you are reminded to take it at the right time. If you vomit (throw up) right after taking your chemotherapy medicine, let your doctor know.



## **Can I Take Other Medicines While I Am Getting Chemotherapy?**

It is important for you to let your doctor know about any medicines that you are taking, even **over-the-counter** medicine (medicines you buy without a prescription from your doctor) like vitamins or aspirin that you are taking along with your chemotherapy medicine. Some medicines may **interfere** or **react** with your chemotherapy. Your doctor can tell you if you should stop taking any of these medicines before you start chemotherapy. Make a list of all the medicines you are taking and how often you take them. Call your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about the medicine you are taking.

## **Planning Before You Start Chemotherapy**

- What medications are you taking? List them here so you can speak about them with your doctor.

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- Do you have any allergies that you need to tell your doctor about? If so, list them here.

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- What type of chemotherapy will you have?

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- If you are getting I.V. chemotherapy, where do you need to go? Write down the place and your appointment times.

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- If you are taking chemotherapy orally, how often do you need to take your medicine? List the medicine(s) you need to take and how often you need to take them.

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## **Are There Side Effects With Chemotherapy?**

Yes, there can be **side effects** or unwanted changes in your body when you have chemotherapy. Side effects are different from person to person, and may be different from one treatment to the next. Some people have no or very mild side effects. The good news is that there are ways to deal with most of the side effects.

The strong anticancer medicines used in chemotherapy are made to kill cells in your body that grow and divide very quickly. This is why you may have side effects with chemotherapy. Along with your prostate cancer cells, chemotherapy also kills healthy cells in your body that grow and divide very quickly. Some kinds of these healthy cells that may be affected by your chemotherapy treatment include: cells that make your hair grow, cells that make new blood cells, and cells that cover the inside of your mouth, stomach, and intestines. Most of the side effects slowly go away after you finish your chemotherapy. There are ways to make the side effects easier to deal with while you are having chemotherapy.

## **How Will I Feel During My Chemotherapy?**

The fact that you need to have chemotherapy, and the effect it has on your life, can cause you to have many different feelings. Fear, worry and sadness are common to many people going through chemotherapy treatment for their cancer.

Some people find it helps to learn about their disease and treatment because it makes them less afraid of their treatment. Find out as much as you want to know. Do not be afraid to ask questions. Your emotional health is as important as your physical health.

Loss of concentration may be a side effect of chemotherapy. This can affect your ability to listen and remember things, which are explained at your treatment visits. Sometimes people find reading during chemotherapy treatment hard to do. Don't feel embarrassed to ask for information to be repeated as often as you need it.

Talking with an understanding friend, relative, minister or another patient may be helpful. Your doctor's office may be able to give you a list of local prostate cancer support groups. There will be men in the support group who have had chemotherapy. You may also contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-

2345 or the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Line at 1-800-422-6237 to find out about cancer resources in your local community.

Many people don't understand about cancer or its treatment and may avoid you because they're not sure what to say or how to help. Try to be open in talking with others about your illness, treatment, needs, and feelings. People will often be willing to lend their support. If you get tired easily, limit your activities and do only the things that mean the most to you.

It is ok if you want to find out about other prostate cancer treatments or ways to help manage the side effects from your treatment besides what your doctor tells you to do. You might like to try new methods to help you deal with treatment and its side effects, such as meditation or relaxation exercises. Make sure that you tell your doctor about other treatments, vitamins or herbal medications you may take.

Remember to tell your doctor or health care team about anything that feels different in your body. Ask questions. The side effects will slowly stop when the chemotherapy stops. Take good care of yourself.

Remember everyone needs some support during difficult times. Don't be afraid to ask for help from your doctor or health care team, during or after your treatment.

## **How Can I Help Myself During Chemotherapy?**

There are many easy things you can do to help yourself during chemotherapy.

What you do can help you:

- Feel better
- Work out any problems that may come up
- Work with your doctor and health care team to help you get better

Step 1: Tell your doctor if you have any side effects (or unwanted changes) from your treatment.

Each person who gets chemotherapy will have one or more side effects from the treatment. What side effect each person goes through is different. The good news is that there are ways to deal with most of the side effects from your chemotherapy treatment.

Step 2: Ask your doctor before you take any other medicine.

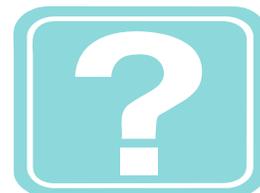
Some medicines can interfere or react with your chemotherapy medicines. Tell your doctor about any medicines that you are taking. This includes over-the-counter medicine (medicines you buy without a prescription) like vitamins or aspirin that you may take along with your chemotherapy medicine. Talk to your doctor or health care team before you start taking any new medicines.

### Step 3: Take care of your health.

Try to eat a healthy diet while you have your chemotherapy. Stay away from people who have colds or the flu. Your body can be weakened by the chemotherapy medicine. Their **germs** (tiny living **organisms** that can't be seen with the human eye that can make you sick) could make you sick. Have all the blood tests your doctor tells you to. These tests let your doctor and healthcare team know how you are doing and how your body is handling your chemotherapy medicines.

### Step 4: Talk about your feelings.

Being treated for cancer can change the way you feel about things. This is normal. It can help to talk to someone about it. Some people talk to their friends or family. Other people talk to someone who has cancer or to a counselor. Your doctor or healthcare team can tell you about prostate cancer resources in your area. You may also contact the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 or the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Line at 1-800-422-6237 to find out about cancer resources in your local community.



## Questions to Ask Your Doctor

These questions may be useful to you when you talk to your doctor about your chemotherapy treatment:

### About Chemotherapy

- Why do I need chemotherapy?
- How can chemotherapy help me?
- What are the risks of chemotherapy?
- Are there any other possible treatments for my prostate cancer?

### About Your treatment

- How many chemotherapy treatments will I get?
- What medicine or medicines will I take?
- How will the medicines be given to me?
- How long will each treatment I get last?

### About Side Effects

- What side effects may I get from my chemotherapy medicine?
- When will these side effects happen?
- Are there any side effects I should tell you about right away?
- What can I do to manage my side effects?

## About Contacting Your Doctor

- How do I get in touch with you or my health care team after your office is closed?

## Hints for Talking with Your Doctor

These tips may help you keep track of the information you and your doctor talk about during your visits:

- Make a list of questions you want to ask your doctor before your appointment.
- Bring a friend or family member to sit with you while you talk with your doctor. Some people get very nervous when they visit their doctor. Sometimes you can't remember everything that you talk about with your doctor. A friend or family member can help you remember what you and your doctor talked about.
- You, or the person who goes with you, may want to take notes during your appointment.
- Ask your doctor to slow down if you need more time to write down your notes.
- You may want to ask your doctor if you can use a tape recorder during your visit. Take notes from the tape after your visit is over. This way, you can review your talk with your doctor as many times as you want.

## **What Have I Learned By Reading This?**

In this booklet, you learned about:

- What chemotherapy is,
- Why you may need chemotherapy,
- How chemotherapy works,
- Ways to get chemotherapy, and
- What to expect when you have chemotherapy.

If you have any questions, please talk to your doctor or health care team. It is important that you understand what is going on with your chemotherapy treatment. This knowledge will help you take better care of yourself and feel more in control so that you can get the most from your treatment.

## Key Words

**Anticancer:** medicines used in the treatment of cancer.

**Circulatory (sur-kyuh-luh-tohr-ee) system:** The system that moves blood through your body and is made up of your heart and blood vessels.

**Chemotherapy (key-mo-ther-a-pee):** a prostate cancer treatment, which treats your whole body with powerful anticancer medicines to kill many of your prostate cancer cells.

**Divide:** to split into parts.

**Dose:** amount of medicine.

**Germs:** tiny living organisms that can't be seen with the human eye that can make you sick.

**Hormone refractory (ri-frak-tuh-ree) prostate cancer:** a change in your prostate cancer cells that allows the cancer cells to grow even if you have no testosterone.

**Hormone Therapy:** a prostate cancer treatment that lowers the amount of testosterone in your body making it harder for cancer cells to grow.

**Interfere:** to get in the way of

**Intravenously (in-truh-vee-nuhs-lee) (or I.V.):** medications that are given to you through a needle in your vein.

**I.V.:** medications that are given to you through a needle in your vein.

**Lymphatic (lim-fat-ik) system (or lymph system):** A system of vessels, tissues, and organs that helps your body manage fluid and fight infection in your body.

**Orally:** taken by mouth.

**Organism:** a tiny form of life.

**Metastatic (met-uh-stat-ik):** when something is caused by the spread of prostate cancer cells to other parts of your body.

**Metastasis (muh-tas-tuh-siz):** when prostate cancer cells spread to other parts of your body.

**Radiation Therapy:** a prostate cancer treatment that uses high energy rays to kill cancer cells in your prostate gland.

**React:** to act against something.

**Recur:** to come back.

**Side Effects:** unwanted changes in your body caused by your prostate cancer treatment.

**Testosterone:** hormone that makes you grow hair on your face and body, have a man's body shape, and controls your desire for sex.

**Ureters (yoo-ri-ters):** the tubes that carry urine from your kidneys to your bladder.

**Urethra (yoo-ree-thruh):** the tube that carries urine from your bladder out through your penis.

**Urinate:** to pee

**Vomit:** to throw up.