

TAKING CANCER MEDICATIONS BY MOUTH

Many cancer treatments can be taken by mouth and do not require going to an infusion center, but there are still important things to remember when starting oral cancer treatments. Some items that you eat, drink, and swallow on a regular basis can lower or change the impact that your prescribed cancer-fighting medicines have on your body. These items include other medications that you are taking, including over-the-counter medicines, supplements and herbals, as well as certain types of foods and drinks. The impact these items can have on your cancer-fighting medicines are called medication interactions. Your oncology pharmacist can help you manage these interactions and any side effects they may cause, to help you get the best outcome from your cancer-fighting medicines.

UNDERSTANDING HOW THESE MEDICINES WORK



The medicines that fight cancer work by killing cancer cells in the body. In order to work well, and cause the least amount of harm, the medicines must be in a form that your body can use. They must be taken into your blood at a certain level. The level is very important. If the amount of medicine in your blood is too small, it will not kill many cancer cells. If the amount is too great, other things (side effects) may happen that could hurt rather than help your body.

GETTING THE BEST OUTCOME FROM YOUR TREATMENT



You and your oncology pharmacist can work together to help you get the best outcome from your treatment. Items to discuss with your pharmacist include:

- Food and drink can affect how your cancer treatment works. Speak with your pharmacist about whether the medicine should be taken with or without food. Some medicines work better when you take it on an empty stomach whereas others may work better when you take it with food. Sometimes, you may need to avoid certain foods at the same time you are taking your cancer medicine to ensure they are not interacting with the treatment.

- How and when to take your medicines. Not all cancer medications are taken every day. If there are breaks in your treatment, you may want to discuss creating a calendar for each round of cancer treatment that specifically outlines which days you should take your medication.
- Possible side effects your prescribed medication may cause. Your pharmacist can help you manage these side effects.
- Other prescribed medications, over-the-counter products, vitamins, herbal products, or supplements you take to make sure that they will not affect how your cancer medicine works. All these products may increase side effects or decrease how well your cancer treatment works.
- How best to store your cancer medicine.

You can help by working with your healthcare team.

- Keep an up-to-date list of your prescribed medicines, and any over-the-counter products and vitamins you may be taking. Be sure to talk to your oncology pharmacist and other members of your team before taking any new medications, even ones that you buy without a prescription.
- Contact your oncology pharmacist or another member of your care team if:
 - You are not able to afford your medication
 - You are not feeling well or if you are experiencing side effects – Your care team may be able to find ways to make you feel better, including holding treatment or considering a lower dose of treatment until you have recovered from the side effects. This can help keep you safe while protecting your quality of life
 - You are having trouble taking or remembering to take your medication
- Visit your doctor as scheduled and be sure to get all the tests that your doctor says you should get.
- Read and save the papers that come with your medicine or that your doctor or pharmacist gives you.