

**ADVICE FOR USERS UNDERGOING
ANTICANCER TREATMENT AND FOR
THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS:**

GENERAL INFORMATION



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Receiving an anticancer treatment	3
A valuable tool for people with cancer	3
Length of an anticancer treatment	4
During the treatment	4
Your treatment plan	4
Anticancer therapies	5
Precautions to take at home during your anticancer treatment	5
Why do I have to take these precautions?	5
What precautions do I need to take?	6
Oral chemotherapy drugs	6
Bathroom habits.....	6
Laundry	7
Sexual intercourse	7
Anticancer treatment side effects	8
Blood cells and complete blood count	8
Blood cells (white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets)	8
White blood cells or “leukocytes” protect you against infections	8
Red blood cells or “erythrocytes” transport oxygen.	9
Platelets or “thrombocytes” stop bleeding	10
How do I increase my production of blood cells?	11
Healthy habits during your anticancer treatments	12
Food hygiene and safety	12
Important information to help you navigate your oncology care	13

INFORMATION ABOUT ANTICANCER TREATMENT

Receiving an anticancer treatment

You recently received a cancer diagnosis and you will soon start your treatment.

Anticancer treatments attack cancer cells nearly everywhere in your body; however, they can also affect healthy cells and cause side effects.

Since every cancer is different, every treatment plan is different too. The oncology care team will create your care plan with you and determine the frequency and duration of your treatments. For example, you may have a treatment session every day, every week, or every month.

This document contains general information on anticancer treatments and the precautions you need to take. The second document entitled **Advice For Users Undergoing Anticancer Treatment and For Their Family Members: Side Effects** has more information on the side effects of anticancer treatments and what to do to cope with them.

A valuable tool for people with cancer

The Oncology Passport you received is an effective tool to help you understand, follow, and actively participate in your treatment plan.

Some of the things that this tool contains include:

- A quick reference guide with useful general information, like emergency phone numbers.
- Space for you to write down your appointments.
- A list of health care professionals, a list of your prescribed medication, and a description of your general health.
- Information about symptoms that require immediate medical attention.

The Oncology Passport helps you and your health care professionals work together. It also helps you self-manage your cancer.

Source: MSSS, DGC

Length of an anticancer treatment

A treatment session can last from 15 minutes to 8 hours, depending on what your doctor has prescribed for your situation.

The person who gives you the date for your next appointment will tell you approximately how long your treatment will take.

During your treatment

We recommend that you wear comfortable clothing during your treatment.

For safety reasons, you are not allowed to leave the treatment room while you receive your treatment.

You may be accompanied by one person only during your treatment. Children under the age of 12 are not allowed in the treatment area. It is not recommended that pregnant women enter the treatment room.

If your treatment lasts a few hours and includes the lunch hour, you can bring your own lunch or you can ask the person accompanying you to get you some food from the cafeteria. For safety reasons, the person accompanying you can't eat in the treatment room.

You can also bring a music player or personal computer. You must use headphones with any electronic devices that emit sound.

Your treatment plan

Depending on the type and stage of your cancer, your doctor will create a personalized plan for you with the goal of:

- **Eliminating the cancer** by destroying all cancer cells and reducing the risk that the cancer will return (curative treatment).
- **Controlling and relieving the symptoms** of your cancer by stopping the growth and spread of cancer cells to help you feel more comfortable if the cancer can't be eliminated (palliative treatment).

(Source: www.cancer.ca)

Anticancer therapies

- **Chemotherapy**, or “chemo,” destroys cancer cells or slows down how fast they develop.
- **Surgery** involves removing tumours or lymph nodes to where the cancer has spread.
- **Radiation therapy** involves the use of different rays to destroy cancer cells and prevent them from developing.
- **Hormone therapy** changes the levels of certain hormones in your body in order to destroy cancer cells or slow how quickly they develop.
- **Biological therapy**, also called **immunotherapy**, stimulates your immune system so that it destroys cancer cells and controls the spread of cancer.
- **Targeted treatment** targets specific molecules in cancer cells, such as proteins, to stop their growth. Targeting cancer cells means a lower risk of damaging your normal cells.
- **Support medication** prevents and relieves the side effects related to your cancer or anticancer treatment. For example, some support medication strengthens and protects your bones from certain cancers and their treatment.

Precautions to take at home during your anticancer treatment



You must do the following **for 7 days after** each treatment.

Why do I have to take these precautions?

These precautions ensure that a member of your family, a loved one, or even a pet does not come into contact with trace amounts of your anticancer treatment.

The medication you receive stays in your body for about 7 days after your treatment. During this time, all fluids and secretions you produce contain traces of the medication. For example, it can be found in vomit, urine, sweat, stool, vaginal secretions and semen.

Pregnant or breastfeeding women should avoid contact with all trace amounts of your anticancer treatments.

What precautions do I need to take?

Oral chemotherapy drugs

- Keep medication out of reach of children and pets. Keep the medication in rigid airtight containers that are clearly labelled for this purpose. Do not store the medication in a food cabinet or damp location.
- Never dispose of unused chemotherapy medication down the toilet or sink. Put it in a plastic (i.e. Ziploc™) bag and bring it to your local pharmacist.
- Wash your hands before and after handling chemotherapy medication.
- If possible, avoid all contact with chemotherapy drugs if you are pregnant, could become pregnant, or are breastfeeding.
- Family members or any person other than the patient needs to wear disposable gloves to handle chemotherapy pills and they must wash their hands afterwards.
- To reduce any dispersion of the powder in your surroundings, do not cut, crush or chew chemotherapy pills.

Bathroom habits

- Always urinate while seated (even if you are a man) to avoid splashing.
- After you use the toilet, close the toilet seat cover.
- Flush twice.
- Clean any droplets from the floor or the edges of the toilet. The toilet should be cleaned regularly with disinfectant (preferably bleach) and paper towels.
- Clean your hands thoroughly after going to the bathroom.
- If you have to handle any fluids (urine, stool, vomit, secretions, etc.), you must use gloves to clean the soiled surfaces with soap and water.
- Pay particular attention to the skin of people who are incontinent. After washing the area around your genitals and anus with soap and water, apply a protective cream. Soiled incontinence pants must be disposed of in a garbage bag for this purpose.

Laundry

- You can continue washing your clothes and bedding in the family washing machine.
- However, any bedding and clothing soiled with fluid by a person receiving anticancer treatments must be washed separately from the family's clothing for **up to 7 days after the end of the treatment**.
- If you can't immediately wash the clothing or bedding soiled by fluids (vomit, urine, stool, chemotherapy medication), put the items in a plastic bag until you can wash them.
- Always wear gloves and always **wash your hands** after handling soiled clothing or bedding.

Sexual intercourse

- You can continue having sex while you are undergoing your anticancer treatment.
- You must use contraceptives throughout your treatment:
 - To avoid pregnancy (the treatments can be toxic to the fetus).
 - It is recommended that you wait 6 months after the end of your treatment before trying to have a child and that you talk to your oncologist first.
- Use **condoms for at least 7 days following your treatment** (this may vary depending on your treatment; talk to your oncology care team) to protect your partner from vaginal secretions or semen.
- Your period may change in frequency or stop altogether.
- Anticancer treatments may impair fertility in both men and women. If you want to have a child in the future, it is important that you talk to your doctor or your oncology nurse navigator (ONN) before starting your treatment.
- For vaginal dryness, use a lubricant, which is available at your pharmacy.
- A decrease in sex drive is normal during anticancer treatments. If this concerns you, please do not hesitate to talk to your doctor or your oncology nurse navigator (ONN).

Side effects of anticancer treatments

One reason for the side effects of anticancer treatments is that the medication changes your healthy cells.

These effects are different for everyone. Everyone is unique, which means that some people will have few to no side effects. This has no bearing on the effectiveness of the treatment.

Generally, side effects:

- Are short-term
- Vary depending on the treatment
- Vary depending on your overall health
- Will gradually disappear

Blood cells and complete blood count

Anticancer treatments slow down the production of blood cells in your bone marrow, which is why it is important for you to regularly get a complete blood count (CBC).

All blood cells are produced in your bone marrow. Your cells go through multiple stages of development before becoming either a red blood cell (erythrocyte), a white blood cell (leukocyte) or a platelet (thrombocyte), depending on what your body needs.

You need to have blood drawn to get a complete blood count (you do not need to be fasting to have this test).

Blood cells (white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets)

White blood cells or “leukocytes” protect you against infections

- The role of white blood cells is to protect and defend you against infections (bacteria and viruses), parasites, toxins and tumour cells in your body.
 - There are five types of white blood cells, which can be present in a blood sample in varying amounts. **Neutrophils** are a main type of white blood cell, and these cells make up over half (55% to 70%) of your white blood cells. They are the first to arrive at the site of a bacterial infection.

Neutropenia:

Neutropenia is a decrease in neutrophils in your blood, which weakens your immune system and makes you more at risk of infection.

- **Due to your decreased white blood cell count caused by your anticancer treatment, you are more susceptible to infection. It is important that you follow these recommendations:**
 - Avoid crowds and people with a cold or who are contagious.
 - Avoid cleaning kitty litter or bird cages.
 - Avoid public pools and hot tubs.
 - Wear gloves when gardening.
 - Follow all precautions for handling food.

A fever is a sign of infection and can put your life at risk if not treated quickly.

Symptoms	Report: Daytime: Contact your ONN* Evening and night: Info-Santé 811	Go to the emergency room if:
Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If your chemotherapy treatments or radiation therapy ended over 6 weeks ago and you have a fever over 38.3° C.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have a fever during your chemotherapy or radiation therapy of over 38° C for more than an hour or your temperature is over 38.3° C.• Do not take medication to lower your temperature (e.g. Tylenol™, Advil™, Motrin™).• Tell the triage nurse that you are undergoing chemotherapy.• When you get to the emergency room, it is important that you wear a mask and wash your hands frequently.

Source: © Government of Quebec, 2011, DGC, *Oncology Passport*

*ONN (oncology nurse navigator)

Red blood cells or “erythrocytes” transport oxygen

Red blood cells act as sacks for hemoglobin. Hemoglobin (Hb) allows red blood cells to carry oxygen from your lungs to the other cells and tissues of your body.



What is anemia?

Anticancer treatments can lower your red blood cell count. This is called anemia. The possible symptoms of anemia are fatigue, decreased energy, palpitations, dizziness or shortness of breath.

What you can do:

- Reduce your activities.
- Save your energy for things you want to do.
- Monitor your fatigue and any worsening signs.
- If possible, get some exercise. We recommend you do moderate physical activity during and after your anticancer treatment (e.g. 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week: brisk walking, biking, swimming, resistance exercises).
- Eat and drink enough to meet your energy needs.
- Try calm activities like reading, games, music, gardening or nature walks.
- Ask your friends or family for help. Accept help from your relatives and loved ones.
- Do your chores or errands when you are feeling up to them.
- Try relaxing activities, such as meditation, deep breathing, yoga, visualization or massage therapy.
- Take short naps of 20 to 30 minutes before 3:00 p.m. so that they don't affect your sleep.
-

Platelets or “thrombocytes” stop bleeding

Platelets are small cell fragments that help blood coagulate (or form a clot) after you get a cut or injury.

What is **thrombocytopenia**?

Thrombocytopenia is a decrease of platelets in the blood, which means you can get contusions (bruises) or bleed more easily.

Because of your anticancer treatment, you will tend to bleed or bruise more easily.

How to prevent bleeding:

- Use a soft toothbrush.
- Use an electric shaver instead of a razor.
- Wear gloves when gardening.
- Moisturize your skin.
- Avoid constipation.

How to stop bleeding:

- Apply direct pressure to the site for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Apply an ice pack.

Symptoms	Report if: Daytime: Contact your ONN* Evening and night: Info-Santé 811	Go to the emergency room if:
Bleeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have nose bleeds. • You have blood in your urine. • You have blood in your stool. • You cough up blood. • You have multiple contusions (bruises) on your skin. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have a constant nosebleed despite applying pressure for 10 minutes. • You have blood in your vomit. • Women: you go through one or more sanitary pads an hour.

Source: © Government of Quebec, 2011, DGC, *Oncology Passport* *ONN

(oncology nurse navigator)

How do I increase my production of blood cells?

There are no specific foods that you can eat to stimulate the production of blood cells in your bone marrow.

However, good nutrition, rest and self-care are all factors that will help you recover and improve your well-being.

The only elements that directly influence the production of blood cells in your bone marrow are the time between treatment cycles and growth factor injections (Neupogen™, Eprex™, etc.), which your doctor may give you in particular situations.

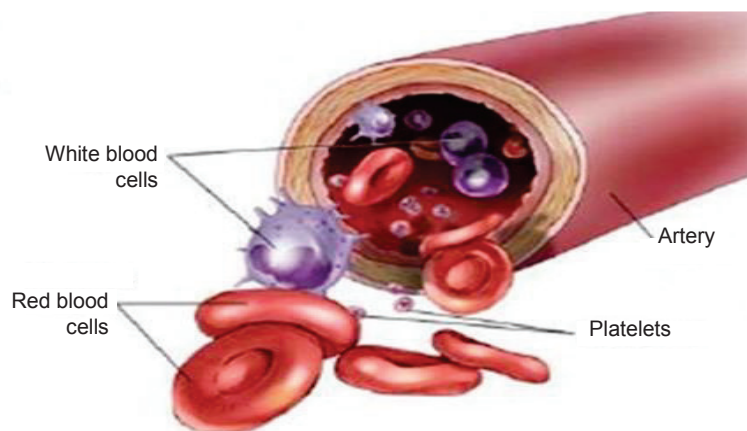


Image: ASCO, 2004



Healthy habits during your anticancer treatments

- Nutrition plays a big role in your cancer treatment and recovery. Eating well gives you energy, helps you feel better, helps you better tolerate your treatment, and strengthens your body.
- When you start a treatment, it is important to follow the recommendations in Canada's Food Guide. We recommend that you do not take natural products (tell your physician or oncology pharmacist if you are taking any).
- Staying hydrated is essential. We recommend that you drink 1500 mL to 2000 mL of liquid per day (unless not medically recommended): water, broth, herbal tea, juice, soup, Jell-O, etc.
- You can drink alcohol in moderation (unless not medically recommended).
- It is recommended that you reduce your smoking or quit smoking during your treatment, as smoking can decrease the effectiveness of the anticancer treatment and can increase its toxicity in some cases. (Do not hesitate to talk to your oncology team.)

Food hygiene and safety

Anticancer treatments can weaken your immune system. You will therefore be more susceptible to infection. Food can be a source of bacterial contamination. It is important to take precautions to reduce the risks of infection.

Foods TO AVOID:

- Raw or undercooked meat or chicken.
- Raw or smoked fish and seafood.
- Deli meats and soft cheeses.
- Raw eggs and foods that contain raw eggs.
- Buffets.
- Honey, dairy products and some non-pasteurized fruit juices.
- Food sold in bulk (except if used for cooking).
- Raw vegetable sprouts (alfalfa or bean sprouts).

Food storage:

- Check the expiry date.
- Do not leave perishable foods out for more than an hour at room temperature.
- Thaw meat, poultry or fish in the fridge or in the microwave.
- Do not refreeze food.
- Do not eat deformed, dented or rusted cans of food.
- Do not eat fruits or vegetables with traces of mould on them.

Food preparation:

- Regularly wash your hands with soapy water.
- Wash all your fruit and vegetables under running water.
- Do not use the same board to cut raw and cooked foods.
- Thoroughly clean cooking surfaces and kitchen appliances with hot soapy water before and after using them.
- Wash the tops of cans with soap and water before opening them.

Source: Bombardier, A., Jean, A., and Leonardo, M.,
Classe d'enseignement pour la clientèle de la clinique ambulatoire d'oncologie, CSSS du
Sud de Lanaudière, 2014

Important information to help you navigate your oncology care

To make or change an appointment with the hematologist-oncologist	Contact your hematology-oncology clinic (see contact information in the appendix).
To request an address change or to change or add a phone number to your file:	Go to the reception of your hematology-oncology clinic.
For insurance or other forms that your hematologist-oncologist must fill out:	Leave your form with the secretary of your hematology-oncology clinic. When the hematologist-oncologist has filled out your document(s), an administrative officer will contact you to come pick them up. Please note that there are fees for this service.
To get a medication renewed:	At your appointment with the hematologist-oncologist, it is your responsibility to ensure you have enough medication until your next appointment. If you nevertheless need to have your prescribed medication renewed by the hematologist-oncologist, ask your pharmacist to fax a renewal request to your hematologist-oncologist . (See contact information in the appendix.)
If you do not have a blood sample requisition:	Call the administrative officer of the hematology-oncology clinic.

Appendix

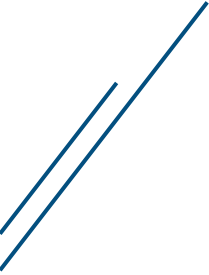
Below is a list of services in each region.

Region	Service	Contact information: hematology-oncology clinic and CRID
Laurentides Centre intégré de santé et services sociaux des Laurentides	Hôpital Régional de Saint-Jérôme Centre de cancérologie Saint-Jérôme 290 De Montigny Street Block D, Room D144 Saint-Jérôme, Quebec J7Z 5T3	Hematology-oncology outpatient clinic Hours: 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Appointment scheduling: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Phone: 450-431-8366 Fax: 450-431-830
	Centre de cancérologie de Saint-Eustache 14 Industriel Blvd. Saint-Eustache, Quebec J7R 5B8	Hematology-oncology outpatient clinic Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Appointment scheduling: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Phone: 450-473-6811, ext. 47700 Fax: 450-473-3582
	Hôpital d'Argenteuil Centre multiservices de santé et de services sociaux d'Argenteuil 145 Providence Avenue Lachute, Quebec J8H 4C7 Room U-114 treatment room (for appointments, check in at Counter 345 at the main entrance).	Hematology-oncology outpatient clinic Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Appointment scheduling: Phone: 450-562-3761, ext.72323 Fax: 450-566-3343
	Hôpital de Mont-Laurier 2561 Lièvre Road South Mont-Laurier, Quebec J9L 3G3	Hematology-oncology outpatient clinic Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Appointment scheduling: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Phone: 819-623-1234, ext. 4293 Fax: 819-623-0861

Region	Service	Contact information: hematology-oncology clinic and CRID
	Hôpital Laurentien 234 Saint-Vincent Street Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, Quebec J8C 2B8	Hematology-oncology outpatient clinic Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Appointment scheduling: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Phone: 819-324-4000, ext. 34721 Fax: 819-324-4112
	Centre de services de Rivière-Rouge 1525 L'Annonciation Street North Rivière-Rouge, Quebec J0T 1T0	Hematology-oncology outpatient clinic Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Appointment scheduling: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Phone: 819-275-2118, ext. 53340 Fax: 819-275-1201
Laval Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de Laval	Hôpital de la Cité-de-la-Santé 1755 René-Laennec Blvd. Laval, Quebec H7M 3L9	CRID (PQDCS) / Breast Clinic RC-135 Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. To schedule an appointment: fax your consultation request with the test results filled out. Fax: 450-975-5967 Phone: 450-975-5505
	Centre Intégré de cancérologie de Laval (CICL) 1755 René-Laennec Blvd. Laval, Quebec H7M 3L9	Hematology-oncology outpatient clinic Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Appointment scheduling: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Phone: 450-975-5359 Fax: 450-975-5044

Region	Service	Contact information: hematology-oncology clinic and CRID
		Radiation-oncology (supraregional) Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Appointment scheduling: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Phone: 450-975-5359 Fax: 450-975-5044
Lanaudière Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de Lanaudière	Hôpital Pierre-Le Gardeur 911 Pionniers Road Terrebonne, Quebec J6V 2H2	Hematology-oncology outpatient clinic Hours: 6:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Appointment scheduling: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Phone: 450-654-7525, ext. 23139 or 23159 Fax: 450-654-1951
	Centre Hospitalier de Lanaudière 1000 Sainte-Anne Blvd. Saint-Charles-Borromée, Quebec J6E 6J2	Hematology-oncology outpatient clinic Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Appointment scheduling: 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Phone: 450-759-8222, ext. 4065, option 1 Fax: 450-756-4750
		CRID (PQDCS) / Breast Clinic C1-270 Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Appointment scheduling: Fax the consultation request to: Fax: 450-585-2298 Phone: 450-470-2652

Updated March 23, 2018



The CISSS des Laurentides has over 80 health and social services facilities and a wide variety of experts who provide quality health care services. Here, patients are at the heart of our vision.

Our organization includes hospitals, CLSCs, residential and long-term care centres, youth protection centres, rehabilitation centres for troubled youth, intellectual disability and autism spectrum rehabilitation centres, physical disability rehabilitation centres, and addiction rehabilitation centres. Our teams are recognized for their commitment and professionalism and work together to provide quality services.

www.santelaurentides.gouv.qc.ca

Communications – June 2018

**Centre intégré
de santé
et de services sociaux
des Laurentides**

Québec 