

Preparing for CANCER IMMUNOTHERAPY

Steps to help you feel informed, confident, and ready for treatment



01 AT YOUR APPOINTMENT

- If possible, ask a friend or family member to accompany you to the appointment for support.
- It is normal to feel nervous or scared and forget things during the appointment.
- Write your questions down ahead of time to be sure you have answers you need.

KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR ONCOLOGY PROVIDER

- **What type of immunotherapy will I receive?**
 - Ask the name of the medication you will be receiving
 - Ask for written information on the medication you will be receiving. This way you can refer to it at a later time, or for a caregiver to review.
 - ***TIP:** Every drug has two names: generic and brand (e.g. ibuprofen is the generic name for Advil®, Motrin®)
- **How does the drug work?**
 - How will it make me feel?
 - Will I be able to work?
 - Will I be able to perform my daily activities?
 - It is important to know how a medication works because that will help to understand why some side effects may occur
- **How is it given** (intravenous drip, injection, pills)?
- **How often will it be given and how long can I expect to be at the appointment.**
 - Typically, every 2,3,4 or 6 weeks.
- **How will I know if it is working?**



REVIEW HEALTH HISTORY

Be sure your team knows about any current or prior:

- **Autoimmune conditions** (such as Crohn's disease, colitis, psoriasis, Rheumatoid arthritis)
- **Organ transplants**
- **Chronic infections**
- **Allergies to medications**

COMPLETE PRE-TREATMENT TESTS

These tests help your care team understand your baseline health and ensure it is safe to begin immunotherapy:

- **Blood work**
- **Imaging scans** (e.g. CAT scan, MRI, ultrasound, etc)
- **Heart or lung tests** (e.g EKG, pulmonary function tests [PFTs])
- **Other**

MEDICATIONS

List all prescription medications and any over-the-counter-medications including vitamins / minerals/ herbals, or supplements of any type,

- **Examples include aspirin, melatonin, fish oils, sleep aids, creams, lotions or salves or medications you take in certain instances (before the dentist, before a CAT scan).**

***TIP:** Before starting any new medicine or supplement, check with your cancer care team. Some medications such as probiotics, antibiotics, acid-reducing drugs (PPIs), or high-dose antioxidant supplements—can make your immunotherapy less effective.



02 LIFESTYLE

DIET

- **Eating a healthy, balanced diet is important during cancer immunotherapy.** Try to include plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein. Sometimes, eating smaller, more frequent meals can be easier than having three big meals a day.

HYDRATION

- **Staying well-hydrated** is essential when receiving immunotherapy.

EXERCISE

- **Staying physically active while receiving cancer immunotherapy can help you feel better.** Physical activity improves symptoms and many side effects such as tiredness, trouble sleeping, and stress. Even short sessions—just 5 to 10 minutes—can help.

***TIP:** Always check with your care team before starting or changing your exercise routine to make sure it's safe for you.



ALCOHOL

- **Avoiding alcohol** is recommended if you are receiving treatment for cancer. Studies show alcohol may make immunotherapy less effective, and it may make some side effects worse. Talk to your PCP or oncology team about support and resources to help you quit.

SMOKING

- If you smoke or vape, **do your best to quit**. Studies show smoking may make immunotherapy less effective, and it may make some side effects worse. Talk to your PCP or oncology team about support and resources to help you quit.

RECREATIONAL DRUGS

- **Be honest with your providers** about use of any drugs such as marijuana, stimulants, and narcotics, etc.

FAMILY PLANNING

- You or your partner **should not get pregnant** during treatment, and for at least 3 months after treatment completes. During that time, it is important to use effective birth control. Talk to you team about pregnancy concerns before you begin treatment.



03 TREATMENT

BEFORE TREATMENT

- The night before your treatment, it is best to **get a good night sleep**
- **Drink plenty** of fluids
- Come with your **list of questions**
- Know that it is **normal to be nervous** when starting

DAY OF TREATMENT

- **Keep your regular routine** including exercise, medications, and diet unless otherwise instructed
- You will **NOT need to fast** for bloodwork unless notified otherwise; if you are unsure, please ask your oncology team
- Be sure **you know exactly where is the treatment unit / infusion unit** is located
- It is always a good idea to **have someone with you** at least for the 1st infusion
- **Wear comfortable clothing.** Immunotherapy is given as either:
 - an intravenous (IV) infusion through a needle inserted into a vein in your arm typically over 30 – 90 minutes
 - an injection under the skin into the abdomen or thigh area typically over 3-10 minutes
- **Inform your surgical team** if you have developed any changes in your health such as: fevers, chills, sweats, or if you have started any new medications including any over the counter or supplements.
- **Vital signs will be taken** including weight, and on the first appointment, and in some cases, your height
- **You may be offered a beverage and snack** during your treatment, or you may elect to bring a snack or beverage with you.
- **You may meet a lot of people:**
 - Receptionist at the facility
 - Phlebotomist: draws the blood in the lab
 - Medical assistant: take vitals, escort you to an exam room
 - Nurses: practice nurses, nurse navigators, treatment nurses
 - Advanced practice providers: NPs and PAs
 - Pharmacist
 - Physician
 - Social Worker



Starting immunotherapy is a major step, and you do not have to navigate it alone. Stay connected with your care team, ask questions as they arise, and take each day one step at a time. Your team is here to **support you** throughout your treatment.