

DAILY HEALTH PROBLEMS FOR CANCER PATIENTS

PROBLEM	WHY IT EXISTS	WHAT TO DO TO COPE
MOOD BEHAVIOR EMOTIONAL STATE	<p>Patients with cancer can face emotional problems because of fear of what is ahead. Behavior may undergo a marked change, swinging from denial to depression. Personality changes sometimes are caused by anticancer drugs and cortisone drugs. They may feel angry, dejected or depressed.</p>	<p>The family and caregivers need to know that this change is a predictable response to a seemingly unbearable situation. Sometimes a simple remark can help, such as, "It must be hard" or "I can see this isn't easy for you." Knowing these feelings sometimes occur makes it easier to keep them in perspective. Although eating properly is important for general well being, don't allow yourself to become unduly depressed if the patient cannot eat as much as expected. Take advantage of days when they do feel like eating to catch up.</p>
ALOPECIA (hair loss)	<p>Some radiation and chemotherapy not only kill cancer cells, but also some normal cells. This mainly occurs with the cells that reproduce rapidly, such as hair follicles. Some people have more hair loss than others. Some may have just a thinning of hair.</p>	<p>This condition is reversible. (There is one exception: When there is radiation to the skull or other body parts with hair, hair loss is permanent.) In the meantime, use wigs, turbans or scarves. Wigs, many times, are covered by insurance (as is the first prosthesis for a mastectomy)- call the American Cancer Society representative in your area for help.</p>
NAUSEA AND VOMITING	<p>Some anticancer drugs effect the vomiting center in the brain. This is a highly individual thing. The same medication may effect some, not others.</p>	<p>It is important to stress that the patient may or may not experience nausea and vomiting. Small frequent meals should be eaten very slowly. Avoid liquids and mealtime to reduce volume of food in stomach, drink fluids one hour before or after eating. Overly sweet foods may also cause discomfort. Avoid greasy or fried foods. Eat dry foods such as toast and cracker, particularly after getting up in the morning. Eat slowly and chew food thoroughly. Try resting or lying down after eating. The doctor can prescribe anti-nausea drugs. The patient may have to try different ones. Remember nausea and vomiting are individual things.</p>

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TASTE	Anticancer drugs, like Adriamycin will cause some patients to say sweets taste sweeter. Following radiation there may be a metallic taste. Some patients develop a funny taste as a cancer drug is being injected. Protein containing foods can taste bitter.	When foods taste sweet, try forcing fluids. Since protein is very important, other ways should be tried to consume it if it doesn't taste as good. Try protein foods cold or at room temperature (cheese, luncheon meats, tuna chicken, ham or egg salad, deviled eggs, ice cream, milkshakes, puddings and custards.) Some foods may taste better with added salt or sugar. Meats may be marinated in fruit juices or sweet wines.
HALITOSIS (bad breath)	This is caused by the breakdown and remaking of the cells that line the gastrointestinal tract.	Use a mouthwash. Use an antacid if the doctor says it's okay.
ANOREXIA (loss of appetite)	Anticancer drugs may cause a loss of appetite	Look for other ways to stimulate the appetite, such as light exercise, or a glass of beer or wine before a meal. Plan meals with favorite foods. Small appealing meals, pleasant settings and encouraging company are helpful.
STOMATITIS (inflammation of cells lining the mucous membrane)	Like the hair follicles, the cells of the mucous membranes may be damaged by anticancer drugs and radiation. One of the earliest symptoms is a sensitivity to heat and cold.	For a dry mouth, try liquids or moist foods. For a sore mouth or throat, eat mainly soft, cold foods, such as ice cream, popsicles, watermelon or grapes. Tilting your head back or using a straw may make swallowing more comfortable. Highly acid foods such as citrus fruits and juices may cause discomfort. Highly spiced foods, alcoholic beverages and smoking may cause discomfort. Good oral hygiene is also important. Use the softest toothbrush available. Use a commercial mouthwash or equal parts water and hydrogen peroxide. Use vaseline on lips.
WEIGHT LOSS	500-1,000 calories above normal requirements is needed daily to gain weight. One half pound gain per week is a reasonable goal.	Keep a record of food eaten each day. Use between meal snacks high in calories and protein or nutritional supplements.