

# Combined Chemotherapy and Radiation for Patients with Pancreatic Cancer

In the treatment called chemo-radiation, you will get both chemotherapy and radiation at the same time. Chemotherapy weakens the cancer cells which helps radiation to work better.

Your treatment team consists of your medical oncologist and your radiation oncologist. They work as a team to plan the best treatment approach with chemotherapy and radiation. You will be involved in your treatment planning decisions for chemotherapy and radiation.

## **How is chemotherapy given?**

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Chemotherapy can be given in one of two ways, either into a vein (IV) or taken orally (by mouth). You will most likely get IV chemotherapy. You will get your chemotherapy slowly for several days.

## **Where and when do I get connected and disconnected to my chemotherapy infusions?**

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At the beginning of each week, you will have a scheduled appointment with the infusion unit before going to your radiation oncology appointment. Your infusion nurse will connect a portable pump to your port using IV tubing. This pump will keep your chemotherapy infusing into your body at the correct rate for five days.

On Fridays after your radiation therapy, one of the nurses in Radiation Oncology will draw blood from your central line and disconnect you from your pump.

## What happens during radiation therapy?

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- Your radiation treatment plan is specifically designed for you, but will consist of 28 individual radiation treatments to your mid-abdomen (stomach).
- You will have a treatment planning appointment (called simulation) before starting radiation treatment.
- You will receive radiation treatments five days a week - Monday through Friday.
- The radiation only affects the area of your body being treated. You cannot see or feel the radiation.
- You will not be radioactive and you cannot expose anyone to radiation.

### Appointment Checklist:

#### Monday

Infusion Appointment

*You will get hooked up to chemo.*

Radiation Appointment

#### Tuesday–Thursday

Radiation

#### Friday

Radiation

Bloodwork

Disconnect from chemo

## What side effects can I expect?

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You can develop side effects from the radiation or chemotherapy at any point during your treatment. You may have mild or no side effects during the early part of treatment. Side effects sometimes get worse over time. You may notice them more during the second half of treatment.

The most common side effects are:

- Nausea (upset stomach)
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue

Talk to one of your nurses or doctors right away if you have any symptoms or concerns about side effects.

## How can I help myself during therapy?

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- Make an appointment to see a dietician during the early part of your treatment. Our staff is happy to help you contact the dietician, or offer other help. Being able to eat and drink comfortably during treatment will make you feel better.
- Use an unscented, mild moisturizing soap when washing your skin. Be careful not to scrub.
- Light exercise, such as walking, will also help you feel better during treatment and give you more energy.
- Talk with your treatment team about any concerns you have.

### Let your treatment team know right away if you have:

- Trouble keeping food down
- Nausea or upset stomach
- Diarrhea
- Stomach discomfort or pain
- Soreness, redness, or leaking around the port site
- Rash or dryness around the treatment area

### How often will I see my treatment team?

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You will see your medical oncologist or nurse practitioner, your radiation oncologist, and radiation nurse once a week. During these appointments, we will draw your blood and check your weight, general health, and response to treatment. This is a good time to let us know about any concerns or problems that you have.

All of your health care providers work as a team. You are the most important member of this team. Please share any concerns, issues, or suggestions with us. Our goal is to provide the best care possible to help you successfully complete your treatment.

### Who do I call if I have problems at home?

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#### Pump problems

24-hour Helpline  
(800) 315-3287

#### Problems with side effects

Infusion unit: (617) 724-2277

Primary Nurse in Infusion: \_\_\_\_\_

Radiation Oncology: (617) 726-8650

Primary Nurse in Radiation Oncology: \_\_\_\_\_



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