

# ddAC-T

Chemotherapy Teaching

# Topics to Discuss

- Chemotherapy Regimen
- Side Effects & Management
- Breast Cancer Team
- Frequently Asked Questions
- When to Call
- Important Phone Numbers



# Chemotherapy Regimen

You are going to start on a chemotherapy treatment plan called ddAC-T. ddAC-T refers to a combination of medications given in a special order to treat your cancer.

- Dose-dense Doxorubicin (Adriamycin)
- Dose-dense Cyclophosphamide (Cytosan)
- Paclitaxel (Taxol)



# Chemotherapy Regimen

- Total chemotherapy course runs 16 weeks

Week 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
A		A		A		A		T		T		T		T	
C		C		C		C									
*		*		*		*									

**Both A/C given IV every 2 weeks for a total of 4 cycles. This will total 8 weeks**

**\*Pegfilgrastim (or biosimilar) injection administer the day after each cycle**



**After AC, T is given IV every 2 weeks for a total of 4 cycles. This will total 8 weeks.**



# Side Effects of AC

- Very common
  - Hair loss, fatigue, low blood counts
- Common
  - Mouth sores, nausea, reflux/heartburn
- Less common
  - Constipation, diarrhea, vomiting, fever, and infection
- Rare
  - Heart damage, bladder damage, leukemia (blood cancer), lung inflammation



# Side Effects of T

- Very common
  - Hair loss, fatigue
- Common
  - Nail change, muscle/joint aches, numbness/tingling in hands/feet, mild infusion reaction
- Less common
  - Diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, fever and infection
- Rare
  - Severe allergic reaction, lung inflammation



# Managing Side Effects: Infection

- Pegfilgrastim (or biosimilar)
  - 6mg injection 24-48 hours after completion of chemotherapy
  - You may be eligible for Neulasta Onpro auto-injector. For more information, visit <https://www.neulasta.com/stay-at-home-with-neulasta-onpro/>
- Taking CLARITIN (loratadine) 1 tablet (10 mg) daily for 5-7 days can help prevent the side effect of bone pain



# Managing Side Effects: Nausea and Vomiting

*In clinic* medications

- CINVANTI (Aprepitant)
- ALOXI (Palonosetron)
- DECADRON (Dexamethasone)





# Managing Side Effects: Nausea and Vomiting

## *At home* prescriptions

- DECADRON (Dexamethasone)
  - 2 tablets (8mg) with food in the morning for days 2-4 after chemotherapy
- ZOFRAN (Ondansetron)
  - 1 tablet (8mg) every 8 hours ***as needed*** for nausea starting on day 4 after chemotherapy
- COMPAZINE (Prochlorperazine)
  - 1 tablet (10mg) every 6 hours ***as needed*** for nausea
- ATIVAN (Lorazepam)
  - 1 tablet (1mg) every 6 hours ***as needed*** for nausea



# Managing Side Effects: Reflux and Heartburn

## *Over-the-Counter Medications:*

### TUMS (Calcium Carbonate)

- 1 to 4 tablets (500-2000mg) ***as needed*** when reflux/heartburn symptoms occur
- PEPCID (Famotidine)
  - 1 to 2 tablets (10-20mg) twice daily ***as needed*** for reflux/heartburn

### PRILOSEC OTC (Omeprazole)

- 1 tablet (20mg) once daily for 14 days



# Managing Side Effects: Constipation

## *Over-the-Counter* Medications:

### SENAKOT (Senna)

- 2 tablets (17.2mg) daily ***as needed*** for constipation
- Other options: DULCOLAX (Bisacodyl) 1 tablet (5mg) daily as needed for constipation

### COLACE (Docusate)

- 1 capsule (100mg) daily ***as needed*** for constipation

### MIRALAX (Polyethylene Glycol)

- 1 capful (17g) mixed with 1 glass of water daily as needed for constipation



# Managing Side Effects: Diarrhea

## *Over-the-Counter* Medications:

### IMODIUM (Loperamide)

- 2 tablets (4mg) with first loose stool, then 1 tablet (2mg) with each stool thereafter (do not take more than 16mg/day) for diarrhea



# Supportive Care Resources

- Yoga
- Acupuncture / Acupressure
- Massage
- Support groups
- Survivorship programs
- Workshops
- Music therapy

To learn more about all our Supportive Care offerings log onto: [massgeneral.org/cancer/supportive-care](https://www.massgeneral.org/cancer/supportive-care)



# Your Breast Cancer Team

- Oncologist
- Nurse Practitioner
- Pharmacist
- Oncology Social Worker
- Practice Nurse
- Infusion Nurse



# Frequently Asked Questions

- **Q: What will my day look like?**
  - Lab Appointment (~15 mins)
  - Provider Appointment (~30 mins)
  - Pre-medications/Hydration (~30 mins)
  - Infusion (~2-4 hours)
  - Times will vary for each patient, but your doctor can help provide an estimate during your first appointment.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Q: **Who do I call for cold caps?**

- You may be eligible for cold caps, a device to reduce hair loss. Please talk to your care team for more information.

## Q: **Can I exercise?**

- Yes, exercise is generally safe for cancer patients. Your ability to exercise may depend on the type of cancer and treatments being used. Please talk to your care team to discuss which exercises are appropriate for you.





# Frequently Asked Questions

## Q: Should I take my nausea medications when I'm not nauseous?

- It is important to take DECADRON (Dexamethasone) ***as scheduled*** despite having no symptoms of nausea. However, if you are not nauseous, you do not need to take your ***as needed*** medications.

## Q: Who do I call for my pegfilgrastim (or biosimilar) refill?

- Please reach out to your specialty pharmacy listed on the pegfilgrastim (or biosimilar) label.

## Q: Can I take herbal supplements and vitamins?

- Many herbal supplements may interact with medications. Please let your team know if you are currently or are planning to take any herbal products.



# Frequently Asked Questions: What Can I Eat?

## **If you feel well:**

Aim to eat a variety of foods high in nutrients including plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and protein every 3-4 hours. These foods help your body rebuild tissues and keep your immune system strong. Stay well hydrated. Most people need between 2-3 liters, or 66-99oz per day, non-caffeinated fluids.

## **High protein food examples:**

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs, seafood, lentils, beans, nuts, seeds, & unsweetened yogurts.



# Frequently Asked Questions: What Can I Eat?

## The day of chemo:

- 1) Come in well hydrated.
- 2) Eat a light meal:
  - Yogurt + fruit
  - Nut butter or an egg + toast
  - Oatmeal + nuts, fruit

If you are experiencing side effects including nausea, diarrhea/constipation, taste changes, mouth sores:

- See [massgeneral.org/cancer/nutrition](https://www.massgeneral.org/cancer/nutrition) for tips and recipes.
- Ask your care team to refer you to our Registered Dietitians.



# When to call?

*If experiencing:*

- Fever of 100.4F (38C) or higher
- Chills
- Bleeding/unusual bruising
- Sore throat or trouble swallowing
- Dizziness
- Problems with urination
- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting
- Uncontrolled diarrhea
- Flu-like symptoms
- Extreme fatigue or weakness
- Cough or shortness of breath
- Confusion or agitation
- Rapid heartbeat
- New swelling in arms/legs, face
- Uncontrolled pain or new pain
- COVID-19 or other infectious disease exposures



# Contact Information

- For urgent matters, please call. For all other non-urgent matters, please use the patient portal
- Phone Numbers
  - Boston: 617-726-6500
  - Waltham: 781-487-6100
  - Danvers: 978-882-6060
- Patient Portal:
  - [patientgateway.org](http://patientgateway.org)





**Mass General Brigham**