

People receiving chemotherapy are at risk for developing an infection when their white blood cell count is at its lowest. White blood cells are the body's main defense against infection. This condition, called neutropenia, is common after receiving chemotherapy. For patients with neutropenia, any infection can become serious quickly.

1. What?	PREPARE: Watch Out for Fever!		
When?	You should take your temperature any time you feel warm, flushed, chilled or not well. If you get a temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher for more than one hour, or a one-time temperature of 101°F or higher, call your doctor immediately, even if it is the middle of the night. DO NOT wait until the office re-opens before you call.	You should also: - Find out from your doctor when your white blood cell count will be at its lowest since this is when you're most at risk for infection. This period of time is also called nadir and usually occurs between 7 and 12 days after you finish each chemotherapy dose—and will possibly last up to one week. - Keep a working thermometer in a convenient location and know how to use it.	- Keep your doctor's phone numbers with you at all times. Make sure you know what number to call when their office is open and closed. - If you have to go to the emergency room, it's important that you tell the person checking you in that you are a cancer patient undergoing chemotherapy. If you have a fever, you might have an infection. This can be a life threatening condition, and you should be seen in a short amount of time.
Why?	- If you develop a fever during your chemotherapy treatment, it can be a medical emergency. - Fever may be the only sign that you have an infection, and an infection during chemotherapy can be life threatening.		
2. What?	PREVENT: Clean Your Hands!		
When?	Keeping your hands clean is important in preventing infections. This should include you, all members of your household, your doctors, nurses and anyone that comes around you. Don't be afraid to ask people to wash their hands. Use soap and water to wash your hands. If soap and water are not available, it's o.k. to use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.	Clean your hands: - Before, during, and after cooking food - Before you eat - After going to the bathroom - After changing diapers or helping a child to use the bathroom - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing - After touching your pet or cleaning up after your pet - After touching trash	Before and after treating a cut or wound or caring for your catheter, port or other access device
Why?	- Many diseases and conditions are spread by not cleaning your hands. - Cleaning your hands is EXTREMELY important during chemotherapy treatment because your body can't fight off infections like it used to.		
3. What?	PROTECT: Know the Signs and Symptoms of an Infection!		
When?	During your chemotherapy treatment, your body may not be able to fight off infections like it used to. Call your doctor immediately if you notice any of the following signs and symptoms of an infection: - Fever (this is sometimes the only sign of an infection) - Chills and sweats - Change in cough or new cough - Sore throat or new mouth sore - Shortness of breath	- Nasal congestion - Stiff neck - Burning or pain with urination - Unusual vaginal discharge or irritation - Increased urination - Redness, soreness, or swelling in any area, including surgical wounds and ports - Diarrhea - Vomiting - Pain in the abdomen or rectum - New onset of pain - Changes in skin, urination, or mental status	Find out from your doctor when your white blood cell count will be the lowest since this is when you're most at risk for infection. This usually occurs between 7 and 12 days after you finish each chemotherapy dose—and will possibly last up to one week.
Why?	- When your counts are low, take even the slightest sign or symptom of an infection as serious and call your doctor immediately. - Infection during chemotherapy can be very serious, and can lead to hospitalization or death.		

Cut out the emergency number card. Fill in your doctor's information. Carry this card with you at all times.



Emergency Number Card

- Treat a fever as an emergency.
- Call your doctor immediately if you develop a fever.
- If you have to go to the emergency room, tell them right away that you are undergoing chemotherapy treatment.

Doctor's daytime number: _____

Doctor's after-hours number: _____

FEVER: TEMPERATURE OF 100.4°F (38°C) OR HIGHER FOR MORE THAN ONE HOUR OR A ONE-TIME TEMPERATURE OF 101° F OR HIGHER.

www.preventcancerinfections.org

Write the number(s) to call in an emergency here:

Doctor's daytime number:

Doctor's after-hours number:

