



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING YOUR PRESCRIBED MEDICATION DURING CHRONIC MYELOGENOUS LEUKEMIA TREATMENT

There are many effective treatment options available for managing chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML). Over the past decade, a new generation of drugs has been approved by the FDA that help many patients living with CML see long-term remissions (cancer stops growing).

In order to manage your CML and maintain your quality of life, you will need to work with your doctor to find the best treatment for you. Living with CML often requires ongoing therapy, which means taking a pill once or twice a day, depending on the treatment and the patient's situation.

It's important not to skip a dose, as this may affect how well your medication is working. For many patients, the main factors that influence adherence (sticking to a treatment plan) are unpleasant side effects from medications. Keeping communication open with the members of your health care team, which can include doctors, nurses, oncology social workers and nutritionists, will go a long way in helping you stay on your treatment plan and maintain your quality of life.

SIDE EFFECTS

The goal of treatment is to find a good fit so that you feel comfortable while managing your diagnosis. For some patients, uncomfortable side effects from treatment can lead them to skip a dose or even stop taking their medication altogether. Each treatment has unique side effects that may vary in type and severity. Side effects such as fluid retention, muscle cramps and bone pain can sideline you and impact your daily routine.

Be sure to tell your health care team about any side effects you are experiencing; your team will work together to remove any obstacles that may keep you from staying on a therapy. For example, your doctor may switch you to another medication or lower your current drug's dosage if you are experiencing side effects. Or, a nutritionist might have helpful dietary suggestions to lessen your discomfort.

STAYING ORGANIZED

In order for a therapy to be effective, you must maintain a steady amount of medicine in your body. To prevent missing a dose, consider setting an alarm on your watch, phone or computer to alert you that it's time to take your pills.

As many people with CML are also taking other medications, organizing medications in a pill box may help reduce the risk of missing a dose or taking the incorrect medications. Routine also plays an important role in adherence by triggering a person's memory.

A weekly medication diary or chart can also help you keep track of the pills you take each day. Bring the diary or chart with you to medical appointments so that you can review it with a nurse or social worker who might have suggestions on how to best manage your medications.

(over)

EXAMPLE OF A MEDICATION CHART

NAME OF DRUG	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
Drug 1	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Drug 2 - Morning Dose	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Drug 2 - Evening Dose	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Drug 3	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Drug 4	√	√	√	√	√	√	

FINDING SUPPORT AS YOU COPE WITH CML:

Support

When living with a chronic condition such as CML, you may feel isolated and alone. However, it's important to keep in mind that you are not alone, and that there are thousands of people living with CML today who have managed their diagnosis for many years. Getting connected with other people in your situation can help you cope with the emotional challenges of CML, which may in turn help you better manage your treatment. Connecting with people who have been living with CML can also lead you to resources that may help you find ways to stay on your treatment plan.



CancerCare (www.cancercares.org) offers support groups both in person and online. Organizations such as the National CML Society (www.nationalcmlsociety.org) and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (www.lls.org) also offer support groups for people coping with CML. The Association of Cancer Online Resources (ACOR) offers a unique collection of online cancer communities categorized by cancer type. You can connect with other CML patients through the ACOR listserv. Visit www.acor.org to learn more.

CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers.

To learn more, visit www.cancercares.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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This fact sheet has been made possible by a grant from Teva Pharmaceuticals.



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