

**You will likely hear many new terms after a cancer diagnosis. This fact sheet defines various cancer-related terms.**



## Terms to Know

**Adjuvant therapy:** These are additional forms of treatment given after the primary form of treatment is done. It is used to help prevent the cancer from coming back.

**Alopecia:** The loss of hair, including body hair, eyebrows and eyelashes. Can be a side effect of chemotherapy.

**Caregiver:** A person who cares for a loved one undergoing treatment or therapy.

**Chemotherapy:** A type of treatment that uses drugs given by mouth or in the veins to stop and kill rapidly growing cancer cells. Also known as chemo.

**Chemo-brain:** A fog or cloudiness to one's thoughts that is a common side effect of chemotherapy.

**Clinical trials:** Research studies that try out new drugs or procedures on people living with cancer. Each study is carefully designed to improve on established methods of treating cancer.

**Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM):** Treatments that are different than conventional medicine but that can be used alongside them. Examples include special diets, acupuncture and nutritional supplements.

**Complete remission:** Refers to patients showing no signs of the cancer. However, there still may be undetectable cancer cells.

**Constipation:** When it is difficult for a person to pass their bowel movements. This can be caused by chemotherapy, low fluid intake, low amounts of fiber in the diet, anti-nausea medications or opiate pain medications.

**Diarrhea:** Two or more loose stools per day. This may be caused by certain chemotherapy drugs.

**Edema:** A gathering of fluid in the tissues of the body that can lead to inflammation.

**Fatigue:** Extreme tiredness that is not helped by sleep. This may be due to cancer treatment, the cancer itself, the emotional aspects of coping with cancer, cancer pain or anemia, which is a low level of red blood cells.

**Hormone therapy:** A treatment that uses hormones to help slow or stop cancer growth. Most commonly used with breast and prostate cancer.



## Terms to Know

**Hospice:** Care focused on addressing and alleviating pain. Usually recommended for individuals who are terminally ill.

**Lymphedema:** A painful swelling that happens when the body's lymphatic fluid is unable to circulate properly and builds up in soft tissues instead. Commonly occurs in the arms or legs.

**Menopause:** The period in a person's life when monthly cycles of menstruation end. Typically occurs at approximately 40-50 years old but can occur in response to chemotherapy. Common side effects include hot flashes, insomnia, irritability and vaginal dryness.

**Mucositis:** Sores inside the mouth and on the mucous lining of the throat and digestive tract that can be caused by chemotherapy.

**Nausea:** Feeling sick to one's stomach. Can occur with or without feelings of vomiting.

**Neutropenia:** An unusually low number of neutrophils, a type of infection-fighting white blood cell.

**Palliative care:** Specialized medical care that focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of a serious illness, including cancer. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and loved ones and can be at any stage of the illness.

**Partial remission:** This refers to the tumor or cancer shrinking.

**Peripheral neuropathy:** Feeling numbness or tingling in the hands and feet. Symptoms related to neuropathy and other types of nerve damage may include difficulty picking up objects or buttoning clothing. You may also face problems with balance, difficulty walking or hearing loss.

**Radiation therapy:** A therapy that uses high-energy x-rays or other types of radiation to destroy cancer cells or keep them from growing. Usually used in conjunction with chemotherapy.

**Relapse:** The return of cancer after a period of improvement or remission.

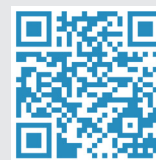
**Targeted therapy:** A type of treatment that blocks the ability of specific cancer cells to grow, divide and spread.

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