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## Systemic Therapy Education Class

Walker Family Cancer Centre





# What will you learn?



- General information about chemotherapy (chemo)
- Where to find helpful information about possible side effects
- How to keep ourselves and our families safe during treatment





# Oncology Patient Education Binder

- Bring your binder with you to each visit
- Ask to review the information whenever you need to



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## Section 1: Phone numbers





# Important phone numbers

- Main Clinic **905-682-6451**

- Calls are answered **Monday to Friday** between **08:30 – 12:00** and **1:00 – 4:30**
- Most **urgent** calls are returned first
- Non-urgent calls will be returned as soon as possible
- If your answering machine does not identify the patient by name we cannot leave a message
- We are unable to take walk-in patients – please call to book an appointment if you need to see anyone on your team





# Important phone numbers

After-hours number: **1-877-681-3057**

Call when the clinic is closed and your concern cannot wait



- You will speak with an oncology nurse
- Have your **Patient Information Sheet & Medication list** ready
- For symptoms or other urgent concerns.



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**Section 2: Patient safety, talking  
to your doctor and team**

**Section 3: Who's who at the**

**Walker Family Cancer Centre**



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## Section 4: Cancer







# Cancer

Where do I get information?

- Your Team
- Binder
- Internet  
(check binder for good sites)





# Need Information?



## PATIENT AND FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

We can recommend websites, books and provide written information about:

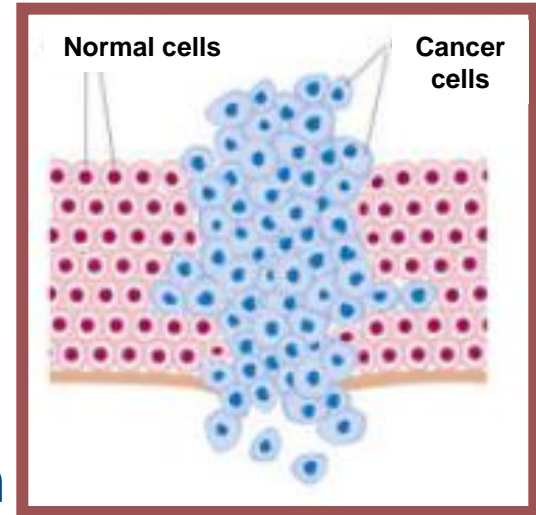
- ✓ Disease sites
- ✓ Available support services
- ✓ Pain and symptom management





# What is cancer?

- A disease that starts in our cells
- Our body's cells normally grow in an orderly way
- Cancer cells do NOT act like normal cells





# What is cancer?

- Cancer cells don't have an "off" switch
- They grow uncontrolled
- They can become tumours or cells that don't work the way they should





# Cancer

- There are many types of cancer (about 200)



- All cancers are treated differently
  - Not all information applies to everyone





# How is cancer treated?

## Systemic Therapy

- Chemotherapy
  - Biotherapy
- Immunotherapy
- Hormonal therapy

Surgery

Radiotherapy

Multimodal Therapy – when you put more than one therapy together

Surveillance





# What is chemo?

- A way of treating cancer by giving medications in your vein, by mouth or by injection





# What is the goal of treatment?



**Cure:** destroy all cancer cells

**Control:** shrink tumours,  
destroy cancer cells,  
increase survival  
and prevent symptoms

**Palliative:** destroy as many cancer cells as possible to reduce symptoms and improve quality of life





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## Section 5: Lessening symptoms and side effects





# Cancer cells aren't the only cells that grow rapidly

Other rapidly dividing cells:

Blood



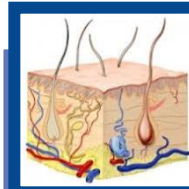
Mouth



Reproductive system



Digestive system



Hair  
And skin





# Let's talk about side effects

- Everyone is different
- Everyone's experience with side effects is different





# Let's talk about side effects

Check out the tips in the  
“How to manage your symptoms”  
fact sheets

How to manage your  
**Side effects**





# When do side effects start? How long will they last?

- At any time during your treatment
- They will slowly disappear when treatment is over and good cells start to get better

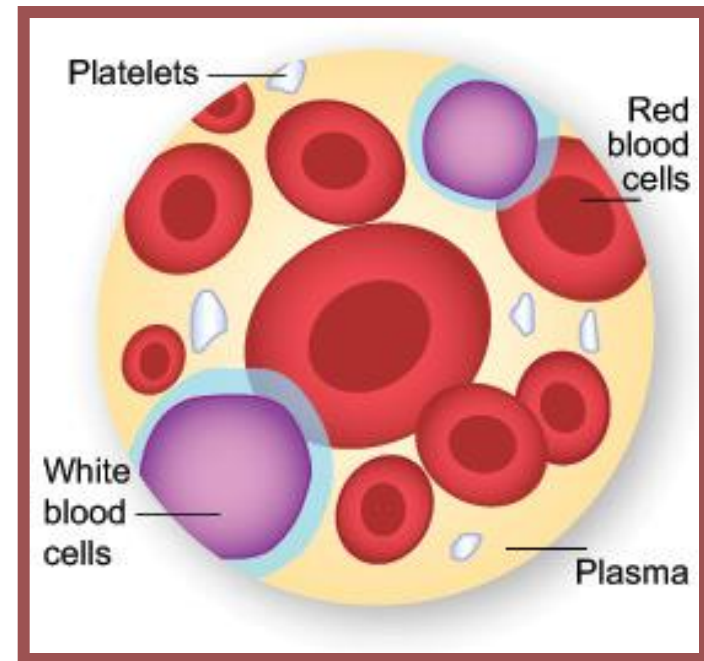




# What happens to my blood?

3 kinds of blood cells that can be affected by your treatment:

- White blood cells
- Red blood cells
- Platelets



**These blood cells all have a different job**



# What happens when my white blood cell count is low?

- Fever may be one of the only indicators you have an infection
- You will need a thermometer
- Take your temperature if you are feeling unwell in any way





# What is a fever?

A temperature of  
**38.3°C** or **100.9°F**  
or higher at any time

**OR**

A temperature above  
**38.0°C** or **100.4°F**  
for at least one hour



- When white blood cells are low our body needs help to fight infection







# What do I do if I have a fever?

## Call immediately



- Clinic between 8:30 and 4:30 (Monday to Friday)
- After-hours number when clinic is closed

- Do NOT take Tylenol for a fever **until** oncologist tells you it's OK
- Follow specific instructions from your Oncologist

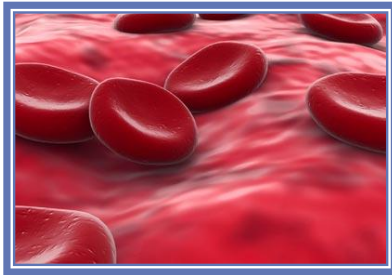


***\*If you are feeling unwell with a fever, go directly to the Emergency Department***





# What happens when my red blood cell count is low?



Red blood cells bring oxygen to the body for energy.

## If you don't have enough you may:

- Feel tired, weak, dizzy or light-headed
- Have headaches, shortness of breath, pale skin or pounding in ears.





# What happens when my platelet count is low?

- Platelets are used to stop bleeding

## Signs of a low platelet count:

- Unusual bruising
- Excessive bleeding
- Black tar-like bowel movements (poo)





# What if I can't stop the bleeding?



- Call the clinic if you think you are bleeding more than normal

- **Go to emergency** if you cannot stop the bleeding





# Hair Loss

## IT IS TEMPORARY



\* Look Good Feel Better



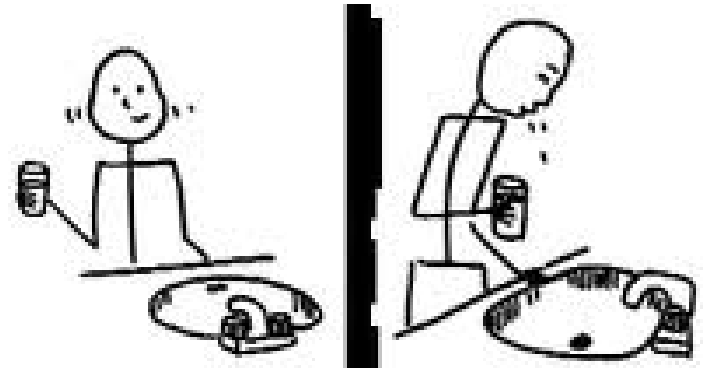
\* Hats of Hope (NH 1<sup>st</sup> Floor)





# Mouth problems

- Start rinsing your mouth on the first day of chemo
- Use Alcohol-Free mouthwash or use recipe on Mouth care fact sheet





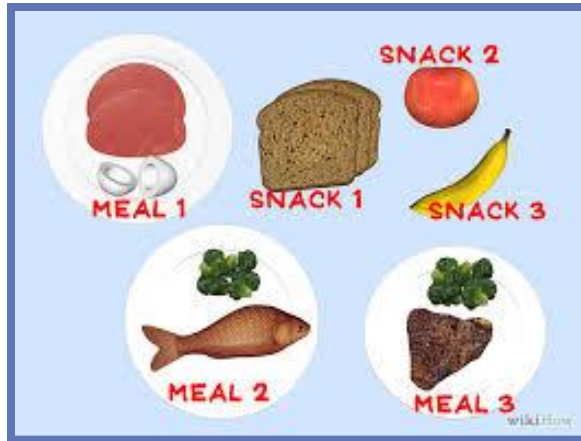
# What if rinsing doesn't work?

- Call Clinic if you have painful mouth sores, white patches or difficulty eating or swallowing
- You may need a medicated rinse ordered by your doctor





# Nausea & Vomiting



- Eat and drink small amounts frequently



- Medications can help prevent and control nausea



**Call clinic** if tips on fact sheets are not working





# Loss of appetite

- Eat foods that are appealing
- Small meals with big calories (smoothies, blended soups)
- Eat with people
- Talk to our dietitian if the tips on the fact sheet aren't working





# Constipation



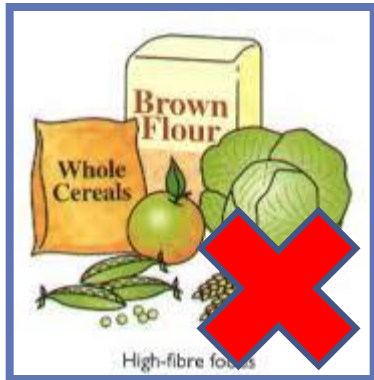
- Drink plenty of fluids - **1.5-2.0 litres** or **8 cups** every day
- Exercise daily – take a short walk around block
- Take stool softeners and laxatives as explained to you – ask your team if you are not sure
- **If no stool (poop) for 3 days call Clinic**



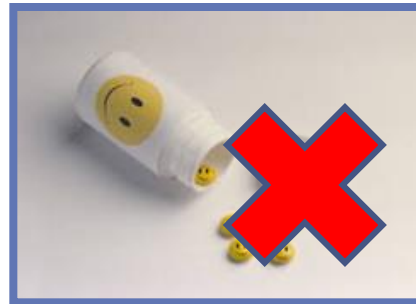


# Diarrhea

- Keep drinking - **1.5-2.0 litres** or **8 cups** daily



- Avoid high fibre foods



- STOP taking laxatives





# What do I do if that doesn't work?

- **If you have followed all the tips on the fact sheet and you are still having stools at 2 or more times your normal amount:**

**Call the clinic**





# Fatigue

- The most common side effect
- Listen to your body
- Bank your energy



## How to Manage Your Fatigue



This patient guide will help you understand:

What is cancer-related fatigue?	pg 2
What causes cancer-related fatigue?	pg 3
What can I do to manage my fatigue?	pg 4
When should I talk to my health care team?	pg 12
Where can I get more information?	pg 14

- Include exercise in your daily routine
- See the Cancer Care Ontario Fatigue booklet





# Protect yourself from the sun

Remember to:

- Wear sunscreen  
**30 spf, at least**
- Moisturize your skin
- Wear protective clothing
- Wear sunglasses and a hat





## Dry Skin

- Use moisturizer that has no alcohol and lots of lanolin – ask your pharmacist
- Women having chemotherapy may have vaginal dryness – use water soluble lubricants as needed





# Sexuality

We all need to feel close to our partner –



If you need information on this topic:

- talk to your team
- ask for a pamphlet
- reliable internet sites



## Intimacy and Sex

A guide for people with cancer and their partners







# Fertility

- Chemotherapy can temporarily or permanently interfere with fertility for both Men and Women
- ***Avoid pregnancy during treatment due to unknown effects of treatment on the developing fetus***





## Medical Forms

- If you need forms from your hospital chart, Health Information Management (HIM) can provide them
- Please check with HIM about fees for records





# When do I call the clinic?



- Your concerns can't wait until your next visit
- You need to change or confirm an appointment time
- You want to make an appointment with one of the Supportive Care Team





# Important phone numbers

- Call **911** if it is an emergency
- Tell them that you are receiving chemotherapy, when you had your last dose and if you are on chemo at home





# If I need to go to the Emergency Department...

- What do I bring?

**Medications**



**Patient education binder**





# What do I do when I get there?

- Register when you arrive
- Tell them you are an oncology patient on chemotherapy




- If your condition changes while you are waiting:  
**let them know**





# Going to the Emergency Department with a Fever

- Present your Fever Card



Interprofessional Education for Quality Improvement Program

How to Manage Your  
Fever

Walker Family  
Cancer Centre  
niagarahealth  
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**How to tell if you have a fever**

You have a fever if your temperature taken in your mouth is:

- **38.3°C or 100.9°F or higher at any time**
- **38°C or 100.4°F for 1 hour or more\***

\*If your temperature is 38°C, 38.1°C or 38.2°C, check it again in one hour. If your temperature remains 38°C or higher, you have a fever

**Call right away if you have a fever**

- Oncology Clinic –Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm:  
**905-682-6451**
- After hours and holidays call:  
**1-877-681-3057**

\*If you are feeling unwell with a fever and have not received a call back, go directly to the Emergency Department.

Do not take Tylenol, Advil or Aspirin to lower your temperature unless an oncologist tells you to.  
Keep a working thermometer at home.  
Take your temperature while you are receiving chemotherapy treatment if you feel hot or unwell (eg. chills).

Emergency Department: Nursing Management of Febrile Neutropenia

**Initiate the **Fever in Immunocompromised Patients Medical Directive** for these indications:**

- Patient indicates that they are receiving chemotherapy or have finished within 4-6 weeks
- Patient indicates that they may have a low WBC
- Current or reported oral temp  $\geq 38$  (Pt may NOT present febrile in ED)

**Initiate the **Sepsis Medical Directive** if patient has additional symptoms:**

- Heart rate > 90
- Respirations > 20
- LOC changes
- Hypotension BP < 90 systolic



# What happens next?

- The emergency doctor will see you
- They will consult the oncology department if needed
- Your electronic oncology record is available to the emergency doctors

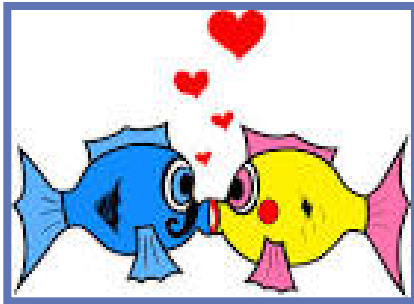






# What changes do I have to make at home during therapy?

- Some changes are needed to make sure you and your family are comfortable and safe



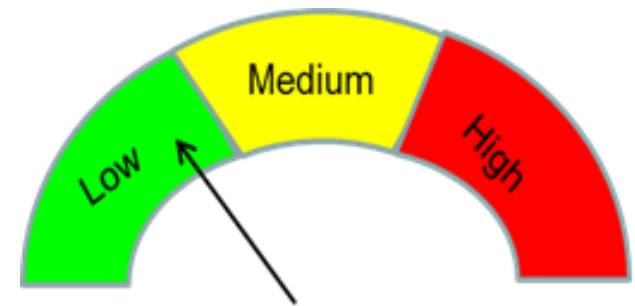
- Being with your loved ones is an important part of life.





# Safety in the home while on chemotherapy

- We get rid of chemo mainly through urine, stool, vomit, semen and vaginal fluid for up to **7 days** after the last chemo dose.
- Risk is really quite low but it is wise to use some safety measures





# Safety in the home while on chemotherapy

- Linens or clothing **with body fluids on them?**
- Use double gloves
- Wash immediately
- Hot water with detergent
- Separate from other laundry
- Two times



2x



2x





# Additional precautions while on chemotherapy

- Men having chemotherapy or who have a partner having chemotherapy need to use condoms for **7 days** to protect themselves or their partner from bodily fluids





# Precautions in the home while on chemotherapy

- Flush toilet with the **lid down** to block spray
- Double flush if you have a low volume toilet



2x





# Precautions in the home while on chemotherapy

- If you are on continuous chemo at home you will get instructions from the oncology team and your home care service provider



## Home and Community Care

**Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant  
Local Health Integration Network**



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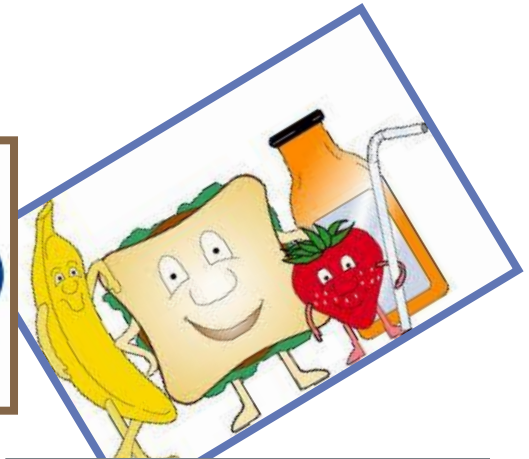
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## Section 6: Staying as healthy as possible





# How do I stay as healthy as possible during treatment?









# Exercise

- Exercise helps with many symptoms and side effects that go along with cancer and cancer treatment
- Exercise is any activity – you don't have to run marathons or lift weights!



CCC Cancer Care Ontario

## Exercise

For people with cancer

### How exercise can help you

Exercise can help you feel better while you are getting treatment for cancer. It:

- Gives you more energy
- Lessens fatigue (tiredness)
- Makes you stronger
- Helps to keep your bones healthy
- Helps you sleep better
- Keeps your heart healthy
- Improves your mood
- Lessens your feelings of anxiety and depression
- Helps to manage your stress

### Starting an exercise routine

Talk to your health care team before starting a new exercise routine:

- It is never too late or too soon in your treatment to start exercising.
- **If you are not currently exercising:** Do some light exercise instead of sitting or lying down. Start with something small or something in your normal routine like walking at a mall or walking your dog.
- **If you are currently exercising:** You may need to do things differently because of fatigue or lack of energy. Increase the amount of exercise you are doing a little more every day until you are back to your normal routines.
- **If you have metastatic cancer in your bones:** Talk to your oncologist before starting to exercise.



**Tip:**

10 minutes of light exercise each day can help you feel better.

### Tips to help you get started

- Choose exercise that you enjoy doing.





# What should I eat and drink?



Canadian  
Cancer  
Society

Société  
canadienne  
du cancer

## Eating Well When You Have Cancer



- This book has lots of good tips
- Talk to your cancer care team about alcohol





# Oral Care

- Do NOT have teeth cleaned while on chemotherapy because of the risk of infection
- Wait 4-6 weeks after treatment is done to have teeth cleaned



- Discuss emergency dental issues with your team
- Use tips on mouth care fact sheet



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## Section 7: Getting ready for treatment days





# How do I get ready for my treatment days?



## ***ALWAYS:***

- Bring any medicine you need to take that day, like anti-nausea, diabetic and pain medication
- Bring your binder with any questions written down





# How do I get ready for my treatment days?

- Bring a snack or lunch



## FOOD ALLERGIES



***No Mangoes or Cashews***

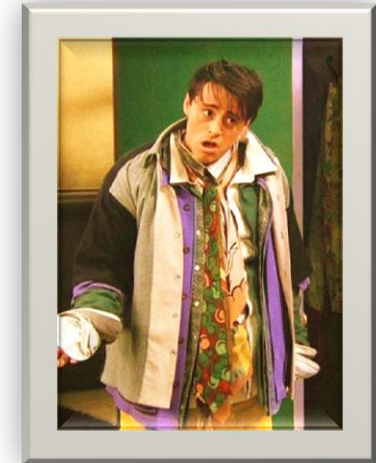




# How do I get ready for my treatment days?

- You can bring headphones for TV, books etc.

- Dress in layers, the room can feel cool during treatment







# Family and Friends

Your family and friends are **important**

For your safety,  
only **one** adult  
friend or family member  
can be in the  
Systemic Therapy Room  
**at a time**



For **safety** reasons, **children are not permitted**  
in the Systemic Therapy Room



**Please be respectful of other patients  
and the healthcare team.**

- **Silence your phone**
- **Thank-you for NOT taking Calls**
- **Feel free to Text**
- **Use earphones when listening to devices**





# When does blood work need to be done?

- Blood work needs to be done the day **before** your chemotherapy
- Chemo on Mondays:  
Blood work on Saturday
- Holidays: Clarify with your nurse





# Symptom and Experience Assessment

## Help Us Manage Your Symptoms

- Completed on the computer at each doctor visit
- Only takes a few minutes to fill out.
- Need Help?  
Ask friends, caregivers, family, volunteers or staff
- This helps us focus on what is most important to you during your visit





# What if treatment is delayed?

- The most common reason for delays are low blood counts



*It's **NOT** your fault*





# What do I do?

You and your team will discuss what's best for you

Repeat blood work?



Delay chemotherapy and repeat blood work?





# Before you go.....

- Do you have your next appointment slip?
- Do you have slips (requisitions) for any tests you need?
- Do you have your prescriptions?





# Important information about medications

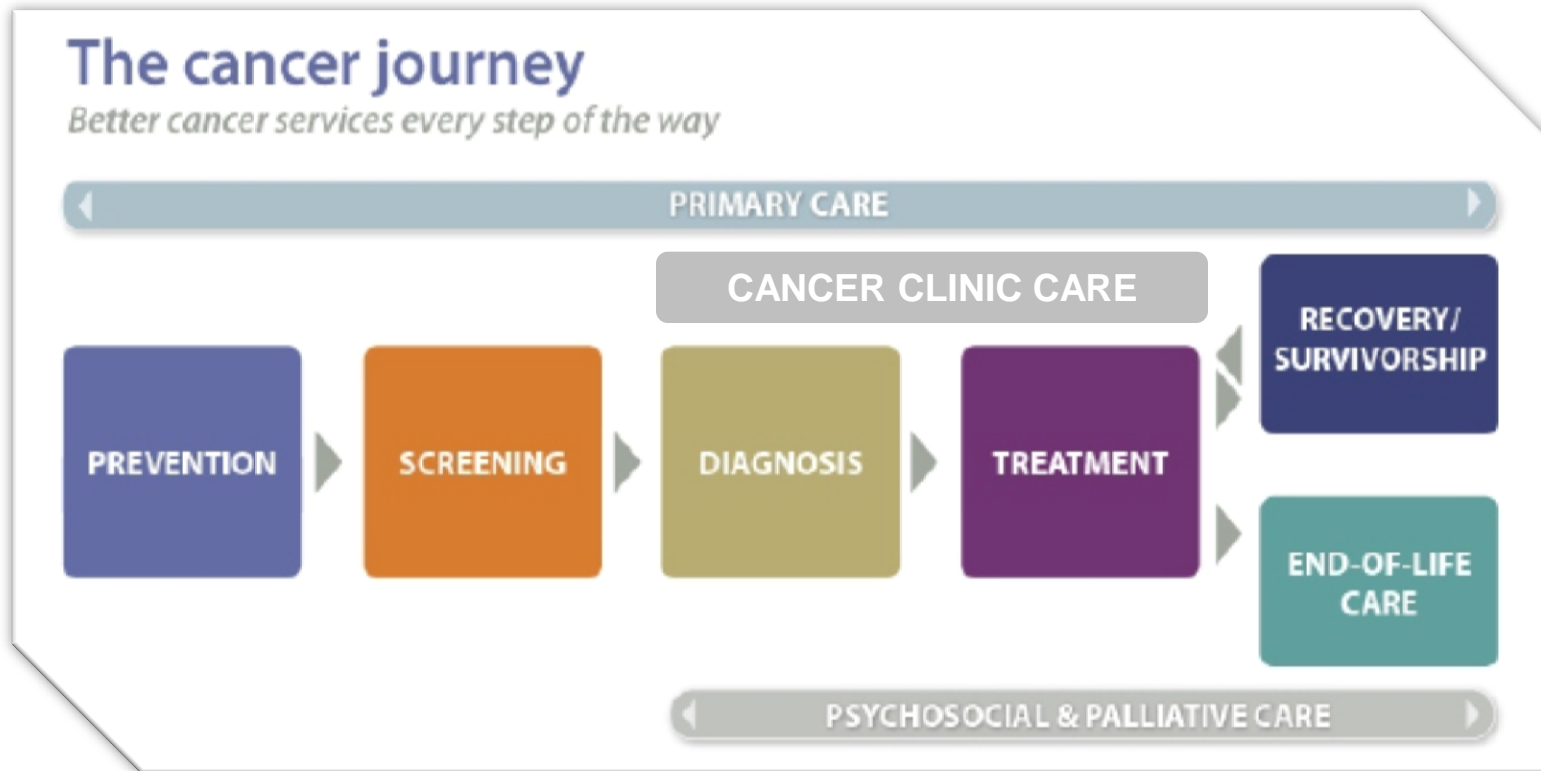
- Carry an up to date medication list
  - Tell your team about any changes
  - Between clinic visits, call your Pharmacy and they will fax us for a refill
- 
- **Plan ahead to avoid running short on medications**







# How cancer patients are cared for





# Don't have a Family Doctor?

Niagara Health Physicians Taking New Patients  
Information Line

Call 905-378-4647 extension 44773

Need a family doctor?

Health Care Connect helps Ontarians  
who are without a family health  
care provider to find one.

Health  
Care  
Connect



Call 1-800-445-1822





# Hauser's Pharmacy

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- ✓ Breast Pump Supplies & Rentals
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- Help to quit smoking
- Stock all hard to find oncology medications
- Mastectomy products
- Lymphedema services
- Medical supplies and skin care products
- Ostomy supplies
- Specialty dressings





# Questions ?



How did I do?  
Let's try a short quiz to see...





# Question 1

**All** laundry for patients receiving chemo needs to be washed separately twice in hot water





Only laundry that has bodily fluids on it needs to be washed separately twice in hot water





# Question 2

Is it OK to hug or kiss a person who is getting chemotherapy?





# YES!

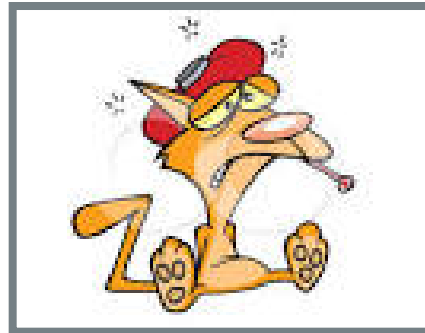
## We encourage it!





# Question 3

## What is a fever?





A temperature of  
**38.3 C** or **100.9 F** or higher  
at any time

**OR**

A temperature above  
**38.0°C** or **100.4°F** for  
at least one hour





# Question 4

## What do you do if you have a fever?





# What do I do if I have a fever?

## Call immediately



- Clinic between 8:30 and 4:30 (Monday to Friday)
- After-hours number when clinic is closed

- Do NOT take Tylenol for a fever **until** oncologist tells you it's OK
- Follow specific instructions from your Oncologist



***\*If you are feeling unwell with a fever, go directly to the Emergency Department***



# Questions ?

