

Combined Chemotherapy and Radiation for Patients with Pancreatic Cancer

Chemo-radiation is a treatment in which you receive both chemotherapy and radiation at the same time. Chemotherapy weakens the cancer cells which helps radiation to work better. Your radiation oncologist and your medical oncologist work with you as a team to plan the best treatment approach with radiation and chemotherapy. Our goal is to provide compassionate care and to help you successfully complete your treatment.

How often will I see my treatment team?

You will see your medical oncologist or nurse practitioner and have bloodwork drawn once a week. You will also meet weekly with your radiation oncologist. Your weekly appointments are a good time to let your team know about any concerns or problems you may have.

Please confirm with your medical oncology team that your weekly appointments, including bloodwork, have been scheduled before you start chemo-radiation.

How is chemotherapy given?

Chemotherapy can be given in one of two ways, either taken orally (by mouth) or given into a vein (IV). Chemotherapy is arranged through your medical oncology team.

If your treatment plan involves oral chemotherapy

You will need to have your oral chemotherapy before starting radiation. Ask your medical oncology team how to get your prescription filled. Oral chemotherapy is often sent to specialty pharmacies, which can take more time to fill.

What happens during radiation therapy?

- Your radiation treatment plan is specifically designed for you.
- You will have a treatment planning appointment (called simulation) before starting radiation treatment.
- You will receive radiation treatments five days a week –Monday through Friday. Treatments are not given on holidays.
- The radiation only affects the area of your body being treated, which is your abdomen (belly).
- You cannot see or feel the radiation.
- You will not be radioactive and you cannot expose anyone to radiation.



What side effects can I expect?

You can develop side effects from the radiation or chemotherapy at any point during your treatment. You may have mild or no side effects during the early part of treatment. Side effects sometimes get worse over time. You may notice them more during the second half of treatment.

The most common radiation side effects are:

- Nausea (upset stomach)
- Diarrhea
- Fatigue
- Heartburn

Chemotherapy has other side effects which your medical oncology team will review with you.

Talk to one of your nurses or doctors if you have any symptoms or concerns about side effects.

How can I help myself during therapy?

- We are happy to arrange an appointment for you to see a dietician. Being able to eat and drink throughout treatment will make you feel better.
- Ask about other supportive care services that are offered in the Cancer Center.
- Light exercise, such as walking, will also help you feel better during treatment and may give you more energy.

Let your treatment team know right away if you have:

- Trouble keeping food down
- Nausea or upset stomach
- Diarrhea
- Stomach discomfort or pain
- Rash or dryness around the treatment area

Who do I call if I have problems at home?

Problems with side effects

Medical Oncology: _____

Radiation Oncology: _____



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