

Prevent Infections During Chemotherapy

This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If you or a loved one has cancer and is getting chemotherapy, I have seen how overwhelming this time can be. You are receiving all kinds of information---from the type of treatment you or your loved one will get, to a long list of possible side effects, such as nausea, low white blood cell counts, and hair loss.

Hi, I'm Lisa Richardson, an oncologist and medical officer at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. I want to tell you about a new online program created just for you...called *3 Steps Toward Preventing Infections During Cancer Treatment*.

3 Steps is an online, evidence-based program designed to help determine a cancer patient's risk for getting a low white blood cell count during chemotherapy. This condition is called neutropenia.

White blood cells help fight infection. Because chemotherapy decreases the number of white blood cells, a person receiving chemotherapy is at risk for getting an infection during this time. For these people, even a minor infection may become serious quickly. Since neutropenia occurs in about half of all people with cancer who are receiving chemotherapy, you need to know your risk so you can better protect yourself. 3 Steps is a free and easy-to-use tool for patients and their caregivers. Here's how it works:

1. Go to www.preventcancerinfections.org.
2. Click on either the "I am a Patient" or "I am a Caregiver" link.
3. After answering a few questions about the patient, such as age and type of cancer, he or she will be placed in either a low-risk or high-risk category for getting a low white blood cell count.
4. You will then receive tips on the following:
 - how to recognize the signs and symptoms of an infection,
 - what to do if you develop any of these signs and symptoms, and
 - steps you can take to prevent infections.

So why is not getting an infection so important? As I said earlier, an infection can become quite serious, leading to hospitalization or even death. We encourage you to share this information with your doctor or nurse. Don't consider it a substitute for their advice or recommendations.

We at CDC hope that this tool will help you take the right steps toward preventing infections during your cancer treatment.

Act now. Visit www.preventcancerinfections.org, take the test, and know your risk.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.