

# Starting Chemotherapy

This handout includes information on starting chemotherapy and how your chemotherapy is prepared.

## Before you arrive

- Invite a friend or family member with you to listen and ask questions.
- Do not use any scented lotions, soaps or perfumes. We are a fragrance-free environment. Fragrances can strongly affect nausea and respiratory issues.
- Eat before your treatment, unless your care team tells you otherwise.
  - » Avoid greasy or spicy foods as they may increase your risk for nausea.

## What to expect on your treatment days

- Usually, your chemotherapy is scheduled based on the length of the treatment.
  - » Some treatments last 6 to 8 hours and start in the morning.
  - » Shorter treatments are scheduled in the afternoon.
- Your appointment may include lab visits, nursing care and a clinician appointment.
- You may not always see your clinician on a treatment day.
- Wait times may vary depending on what labs have been ordered and your prescribed treatment or procedure.

## What to bring to your appointment

- Snacks or meals
  - » Crackers, toast, juice, coffee, tea, sodas and assorted snacks are available for patients.
  - » At Regions Cancer Care Center, food is available for purchase at the Overlook Cafe and Hospital Cafeteria.
  - » At Riverside Cancer Care Center, several restaurants are within walking distance or delivery is available.
- DVDs, books or other activities
  - » DVD players are available in all of our private treatment areas.
  - » We have a selection of movies for you to watch.
  - » A limited number of iPads are available at Regions Cancer Care Center.
  - » Free wifi is available.
- Medications, such as pain medication or insulin, you need during your visit

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## What happens after I check in and before I start treatment?

Making sure your chemotherapy is safe and accurate takes time due to multiple steps and safety checks. Your treatment may begin 60 to 90 minutes after you check in for your infusion room appointment. The steps that are taken are:

- Chemotherapy is ordered by your doctor.
- Your current labs and physical assessment are reviewed by your doctor, nurse and specially trained pharmacist.
- Based on your labs and assessment, you may:
  - » Receive chemotherapy as planned
  - » Receive a different dose of the same drug
  - » Receive no treatment that day
- If you are receiving chemotherapy, the nurse sends the medication order to the pharmacy.
- The pharmacist reviews the chemotherapy order for accuracy and completeness.
  - » The pharmacist prepares 1 medication order at a time, so each medication gets his or her full attention.
  - » The pharmacist and pharmacy technician prepare your chemotherapy using 3 stages of checking to ensure the medication order is correct. The technician reviews the label, gathers the supplies and prepares the chemotherapy in a sterile environment.
  - » The pharmacy technician takes pictures of the chemotherapy for the pharmacist to ensure the medication is correct.
  - » Preparing your chemotherapy could take from 20 to 60 minutes, because some medications take more time to dissolve.
- The medication is delivered to the care unit.
- Two specially trained oncology nurses ensure your chemotherapy is safe and accurate.
- Your nurse scans a barcode to make sure it is the correct medication and matches the order in the computer.
- Your chemotherapy is given to you by your oncology nurse.

## All chemotherapy preparations must be:

- **Sterile**—The chemotherapy must be sterile (germ-free), so you do not get infected by the chemotherapy as it is administered into your body.
- **Accurate**—The chemotherapy must be made accurately, which means making it exactly as your doctor orders. The drug and dose must be correct. The fluid that contains the drug must be accurate. Also, the chemotherapy must be labeled accurately to include the necessary information.
- **Timely**—The chemotherapy must be made in a timely manner that also guarantees sterility and accuracy. Timely does not mean “as fast as possible.” Timely means the least amount of time that still produces an accurate and sterile product.

## Additional information

Visit [regionshospital.com/cancer](http://regionshospital.com/cancer) or [healthpartners.com/cancer](http://healthpartners.com/cancer) for further information.

## Telephone number

If you have questions, call:

- **Regions Cancer Care Center**  
651-254-3572  
Weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Regions Gynecology and Oncology**  
651-254-9602  
Weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Riverside Cancer Care Center**  
612-341-4800  
Weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **HealthPartners CareLine<sup>SM</sup> service**  
612-339-3663  
Weekdays, 5 p.m. to 8 a.m.  
Weekends and holidays, 24 hours  
Your call is directed to a nurse line for medical advice.