

Small Cell Lung Cancer: Managing Side Effects

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Managing Side Effects

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As you or your loved one starts small cell lung cancer treatments, you may have questions about treatment and the side effects that sometimes happen. The purpose of this brochure is to provide answers to your questions and to help you or your loved one feel better while moving through your cancer treatments.

This brochure provides information on common small cell lung cancer treatments and side effects with helpful ways to manage them. Always tell your healthcare team if you are having side effects. You may use the **Side Effects Record** in this brochure to write down your symptoms and use the **Emergency Contact** form to list the names and phone numbers of your healthcare team and loved ones. Always ask your healthcare team about the best way to manage your side effects.

Common Treatments for Small Cell Lung Cancer

Chemotherapy:

Chemotherapy is often used to treat small cell lung cancer. Your treatment may involve one or two chemotherapy drugs given together through a vein. Chemotherapy is given in repeating cycles, each followed by a rest period. This cycle often repeats every 3 weeks. Other medications may be also added to your chemotherapy as needed such as steroids or anti-nausea medicines. All the medicines together are sometimes called the “chemo cocktail.”

Some side effects of chemotherapy may include nausea, vomiting, loss or change in appetite/ taste, hair loss, fatigue, low blood cell counts, nerve pain, shortness of breath, coughing or mouth sores.

The side effects from cancer treatment will depend on the type of treatment you receive, how long you receive it and your body’s response. You may not have any side effects or you may have just a few. Many side effects can be prevented or managed with help from your healthcare team.

Immunotherapy:

Immunotherapy is given through a vein and helps your own body fight cancer. Treatment for extensive stage small cell lung cancer often includes chemotherapy and immunotherapy combination, based on where the cancer is in your body.

Some side effects of immunotherapy may include fatigue, rash, cough, itching, joint pain, muscles aches, sore mouth, changes to certain levels in your blood, shortness of breath or trouble sleeping.

Radiation Therapy:

Radiation therapy uses high energy beams to kill or shrink cancer cells and is often used with chemotherapy. It can be used to manage pain if the cancer has spread and other therapies are not working. It is also sometimes used to treat the whole brain to reduce the risk of cancer spreading to the brain.

The side effects of radiation therapy depend on the area of the body that gets the radiation. Side effects may include fatigue, irritation to skin or loss of hair in the area where radiation is given, trouble swallowing if radiation was given near the throat, or diarrhea if radiation is aimed near the lower stomach. Radiation aimed at the brain may cause short-term memory loss, but newer methods can reduce this risk.

Small Cell Lung Cancer Treatment Side Effects at a Glance

Use this chart to see which side effects go with each treatment type. Remember, you may have none or only a few of the side effects listed below.

Side Effect	Chemo-therapy	Immuno-therapy	Radiation Therapy
Aching Joints and Muscles	✓	✓	
Constipation	✓	✓	
Coughing	✓	✓	Only if chest is treated
Diarrhea	✓	✓	Only if pelvis is treated
Fatigue	✓	✓	✓
Hair Loss	✓		Only the radiated area
Loss of Appetite	✓	✓	✓
Low Blood Cell Count	✓		
Memory/Thinking Changes	✓	✓	Only if brain is treated
Mouth Sores	✓	✓	
Nausea/Vomiting	✓		
Nerve Pain or Numbness	✓		
Shortness of Breath		✓	✓
Skin Changes		✓	✓
Throat Soreness		✓	✓
Trouble Sleeping	✓	✓	

Remember to call your healthcare team right away if you have:

- A new or worsening side effect from treatment such as trouble breathing, chest pain, fainting, dizziness or confusion.
- Diarrhea with bad cramping or pain, blood in the stool or urine, or dark urine.
- Fever of 100.5F or higher.
- Changes in vision, memory, or thinking skills.
- Swelling in in any part of the body.

Cancer Treatment Side Effects – Who Can Help?

Your healthcare team and palliative care specialists can help.

Cancer treatments often have side effects, but it is important to know that you may not have any of these effects or you may have just a few. **It is always important to talk to your healthcare team about ways to manage side effects before you have them. Very often, they can be prevented, treated or eased with healthy practices or medications.** Cancer treatments have improved over time and the good news is so has the management of side effects!

Palliative care

The purpose of palliative care is to prevent or treat symptoms from lung cancer and help manage side effects from treatment. You can start palliative care at any time after a cancer diagnosis. Palliative care is very important in advanced lung cancer to improve quality of life.

How is palliative care different than hospice care?

Hospice care can start when a person's survival time appears to be about six months. It is often started when active treatment is no longer given. Hospice care can focus on improving quality of life by controlling pain and other symptoms.

Where can I get palliative care?

Palliative care may be provided in hospitals, outpatient clinics, or in your home. It is offered by a healthcare team who work together with your treatment team.

What next?

When you meet with your palliative care team, they will check your pain level and other symptoms. They will explore your goals with you so that your treatment matches your goals each step of the way.

Will insurance cover palliative care?

Yes. Most insurance plans, including Medicare, will cover palliative care as part of your lung cancer treatment.

Studies show that people with lung cancer who receive palliative care early have a better quality of life and live longer.

Cancer Treatment Side Effects – What You Can Do

FACT: The most important person on your healthcare team is YOU! There are many things you can do to help manage the side effects of your treatment.

Use this information as a guide and always call your healthcare team with questions or concerns. You may find it helpful to keep track of which tips you use and what works best for you.

Important Things to Know About Side Effects:

- The side effects you have from cancer treatment are not a measure of how well it is working. It can work very well even if you aren't feeling side effects.
- We offer some ways to manage side effects, but you may also find other ways that help.
- Most side effects only happen while you are on treatment and go away after treatment is over, but some side effects last longer than others or never fully go away.
- Each person manages cancer treatment side effects in their own way. Even if you are on the same medication as someone else, their side effects may not be the same as yours. The way someone's body works is unique to each person.
- The longer you have received treatments, the more likely you are to have a side effect. Working with your healthcare team and a palliative care team can help.



Aching Joints and Muscles

Aching joints and muscles are a common side effect of cancer treatment. They may be mild or severe, last a short time or a long time. Sometimes other medicines in your chemotherapy “cocktail” can cause your muscles and joints to ache.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage aching joints and muscle:

- Gentle stretching and exercise, such as yoga, walking or swimming may help with aching joints and muscles. It makes your muscles stronger and improves joint movement.
- Use a gentle heating pad.
- Take a warm bath or shower.
- Meditation may help with relaxation and ease pain.

Common medications:

- Pain medicines
- Steroids
- Certain anticonvulsants and antidepressants may block pain

If you are having trouble with aching joints or muscles, talk to your healthcare team about whether acupuncture, massage, occupational or physical therapy is right for you.



Constipation

Constipation is a common problem. It happens when you have bowel movements less often or they are hard and not easy to pass. You may feel bloated (full of gas) or have some cramping or pain in your stomach. You may also not feel like eating.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage constipation:

- If you are taking or start taking opioid pain medication, ask for help from your healthcare team to prevent constipation.
- Drink at least eight glasses of water daily.
- Eat high fiber foods such as whole grain cereals, fruits (like prunes, figs, and dates), vegetables, nuts, peanut butter and popcorn.
- Try to avoid dairy products and fried foods.
- Exercise if you can and as approved by your healthcare team, even if it is only walking around your house.
- Drink a warm drink half an hour to an hour before the time you normally have a bowel movement.

Common medications:

- Over-the-counter stool softener Senokot, Colace or Miralax
- Over-the-counter laxatives like Dulcolax

Your healthcare team may prescribe additional medications if those are not helpful.

Coughing

Coughing is normal and helps to keep your airway clear. A cough can be caused by a cold, allergies, your cancer and/or treatment. How your doctor decides to treat your cough will be based on the cause and whether the cough is dry or wet.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage coughing:

- Try a humidifier to keep your throat and nose from being too dry.
- Drink plenty of water to thin mucous.
- If you suffer from heartburn, stay away from foods that make your heartburn worse because they can also make your cough worse.
- Stay away from smoky places. If you smoke, try to cut back. Your healthcare team can help.
- Stay away from sprays like hairspray or perfumes that may bother your throat.

Common medications:

- Over-the-counter cough or allergy medicines
- Cough drops
- Hycodan (hydrocodone bitartrate and homatropine methylbromide)

Tell your healthcare team right away if you cough and see blood and/or colored mucous, it interferes with your sleep or doesn't go away in a reasonable amount of time.



Diarrhea

Diarrhea is, in very basic terms, “loose stool.” It can happen as a side effect of cancer treatment and may also be an unintended result of medications meant to ease constipation.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage diarrhea:

- Avoid milk, dairy products and spicy/greasy foods.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine and carbonated drinks.
- Stay away from gassy foods.
- Drink a lot of clear liquids like broth and fruit juices in addition to water to replace lost salt and electrolytes.
- Eat bland foods like bananas, rice, applesauce and toast.

Common medications:

- Bulking agents such as Citrucel
- Lomotil
- Imodium

It is important to tell your healthcare team right away if you have diarrhea with bad cramping or pain, fever, dizziness, blood in the stools or dark urine. If your diarrhea lasts more than 3 days, tell your healthcare team to prevent dehydration (not enough water in the body.)

Fatigue - Feeling Very Tired

Fatigue is an extreme tired feeling that may not be relieved by extra amounts of sleep or rest. Fatigue may lead to trouble completing everyday tasks, even self-care tasks such as bathing, and eating may feel hard to start or complete.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage cancer fatigue:

- Exercise often, as approved by your doctor. Exercise really does have the power to increase your energy level.
- Seek treatment for depression, pain, sleep problems or other health problems that may be adding to your fatigue.
- Make sure you are eating enough food (and protein!) and drinking a lot of liquids.
- Try sitting rather than standing when doing tasks like grooming, prepping a meal or showering.
- Pace yourself, even on days when you are feeling your best.
- Save your energy by planning, spacing tasks out over time and organizing all needed items for the task.
- Get plenty of rest, but don't nap during the day for more than 30 minutes at a time. A short nap or rest is best.
- Ask for help with tasks when you need it.



Loss of Appetite – Not Feeling Like Eating

Many people with cancer say that foods may not taste and smell the same as they did before treatment. These changes may make you not feel like eating. Some common taste and smell changes are:

- A metal, medicine, or sweet taste.
- Dry mouth.
- A need to add salt or sugar to food.
- A new dislike for foods you used to enjoy.
- Upset stomach from the smell of some foods.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage loss of appetite:

- Eat foods that are cold or warm if cooking odors bother you.
- Eat food that tastes good to you but try to aim for healthy foods that are high in calories, protein and other nutrients.
- Let other people fix your meals. This will save you energy and keep you away from cooking odors.
- Try to eat 6 to 8 small meals with snacks every day.
- Drink between your meals instead of during meals to keep yourself hydrated.
- Try shakes such as Ensure and Boost. They can help you get nutrition when it is hard to eat.
- If you have dry mouth, suck on ice cubes, candies or chew gum.



Hair Loss

Hair loss from cancer treatment happens because chemotherapy drugs don't just affect cancer cells. They affect other cells that divide quickly in the body, like hair cells. Some chemotherapy drugs will cause hair loss and some do not. Radiation may also cause hair loss to the areas being treated.

When hair loss happens, it may be lost over time or all at once. Some or all hair may be lost, including eyebrows and eye lashes.

Hair loss from cancer treatment can be upsetting for both men and women. Hair is a part of who we are and hair loss is an outward sign of cancer. Unfortunately, there is nothing that can prevent hair loss from occurring, but there are ways to prepare for it.

Helpful tips to manage hair loss:

- If your hair is long, it may make it easier to cut it short before hair loss starts.
- Use mild shampoos, soft hairbrushes and low heat on your hair.

- After hair loss, you may choose to cover your head:

- Sometimes it helps to find a wig that looks like your own hair. Many hair stylists can help cut the wig to match your hair. It's easiest to do this before your hair falls out so the stylist can see what your hair looks like. Some people like to wear wigs that are very different from their natural hair and have fun with something new. Wigs may be covered by insurance, or there are organizations that can offer free or reduced cost wigs.
 - You may choose to use scarves or head coverings. They tend to be very comfortable with many styles, colors and patterns to fit your needs and sense of style.
 - Wearing a hat is also a common choice that can match to your style and personality.
- If you choose not to cover your head, be sure to use sunscreen on your scalp when in the sun.



Low Blood Cell Count (Anemia/Neutropenia)

Cancer treatments can lower the number of certain blood cells in your body. Your healthcare team will check your blood often to be sure the number of blood cells in your body stays at the right levels. When the number of your blood cells has decreased it is called myelosuppression.

Anemia (Low Red Blood Cell Count)

Anemia develops when the number of red blood cells in the body becomes very low. Red blood cells carry oxygen through your body and if the number of red blood cells in the blood becomes low, you may feel tired, weak, dizzy, have cold hands or feet, have headaches, shortness of breath or have a fast heartbeat.

Helpful tips to manage low red blood cell count:

- Get routine bloodwork checks.
- Eat a healthy diet with lots of protein and iron.
- Get good rest.
- Drink a lot of water.

Neutropenia (Low White Blood Cells)

Neutropenia occurs when the number of white blood cells in the body becomes very low. The job of white blood cells is to fight infection so if they get too low, you may have a higher risk of infection (getting sick, such as catching a cold or flu.)

Helpful tips to manage low white blood cell count:

- Get routine bloodwork checks.
- Take these steps to prevent infection.
 - Wash your hands often.
 - If you have a cut or sore, wash it well and put on an antibiotic ointment.
 - Bathe daily, brush your teeth twice a day and floss (unless you were told not to do so by your doctor).
 - Stay away from people who are sick.

Common medication:

- Medications such as Neupogen, Neulasta, generic growth factors, and Cosela (trilaciclib) may be available to help with low blood cell counts. Ask your healthcare team what is right for you.
- Vitamin or mineral supplements such as iron, folic acid or B12.

It is important to tell your healthcare team right away if you have a fever over 100.5 F or have “the shakes” or chills. Low blood cell counts can be treated by your healthcare team. Please let them know if you are having symptoms.



Memory and Thinking Changes

Some people may notice that it is harder to remember things or feel like thoughts are “foggy” since starting cancer treatment. It may seem a little harder to complete a task or feel like it takes more mental effort to focus. These changes often go away on their own but it is good to talk to your healthcare team if the changes are making it too hard to manage your daily routine.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage changes in memory and thinking skills:

- Meditation can help your focus and awareness.
- Exercise has been proven to improve thinking, level of alertness, mood and focus. Walking, caring for pets and gardening are examples of light exercise that can help.
- Use a list, use reminders or alarms to keep track of what needs to be done.
- Do the hardest mental tasks when you have the most energy.
- Get enough rest and sleep.
- Set up and follow regular routines and focus on one task at a time.
- Stay away from alcohol that may limit mental sharpness.

If you are having changes in your memory or thinking skills, ask your healthcare team if neuropsychology, speech therapy, occupational therapy or cognitive rehabilitation is right for you.

Mouth Sores

Sometimes cancer treatments can affect the inside of your mouth or gums and cause sores. This can make it hard to eat or talk. The goal is to reduce any pain until your mouth heals.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage loss of appetite:

- Suck on ice chips or a frozen pop.
- Gently clean your teeth, gum, and tongue after each meal.
- Get regular check-ups at your dentist.
- Stay away from hot, spicy or sharp foods.
- Eat small meals more often.
- Use a straw to drink.
- Rinse your mouth with warm salt water.

Common medications:

- Magic Mouthwash
- Numbing gels like Orajel or Zilactin-B
- Over-the-counter pain medication



Nausea or Vomiting

Nausea (feeling the need to vomit) and vomiting are common treatment side effects and can lead to loss of appetite, weight loss, fatigue and dehydration (not enough water in the body). Nausea and vomiting can often be prevented with help from your healthcare team.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage nausea and vomiting:

- Eat bland foods. Don't eat greasy, salty, spicy, and heavily seasoned foods.
- Sit upright for two hours after eating.
- Wear clothing that is loose fitting around the waist.
- Try relaxation techniques such as guided imagery, meditation or soothing music.
- Distractions like music, reading or TV can take your mind off your symptoms.
- Stay away from strong odors. Eating foods that don't have strong smells may help to decrease nausea.
- Try acupressure wrist bands (found in drugs stores) or ginger products.

Common medications:

- Ativan (Lorazepam)
- Reglan (Metoclopramide)
- Zofran (Ondansetron)
- Compazine (Prochlorperazine)
- Anergan or Phenergan (Promethazine)

It is important to tell your healthcare team right away if you are not able to hold down food or drink to prevent dehydration (not enough water in the body.)



Nerve Pain or Numbness

You may feel numbness or tingling (neuropathy) feelings in your hands and feet. Some say it feels like they are standing on or holding ice. It can also make it hard to feel hot or cold temperatures.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage nerve pain or numbness:

- Distract yourself or using guided meditation.
- Use warm water instead of hot or cold which can make the feeling worse.
- If you have numbness in your feet, always wear shoes and check your feet for open sores once a day.
- Stay away from things that make your neuropathy worse, such as tight shoes, standing for too long or drinking alcohol.
- If you have numbness in your hands, use extra care when cooking and protect your hands from hot surfaces and sharp objects.

Common Medications:

- Steroids
- Patches or creams of numbing medicine
- Antidepressant medicines
- Anti-seizure medicines

If you have nerve pain or numbness, talk to your healthcare team about whether acupuncture, physical or occupational therapy may be right for you.



Shortness of Breath – Difficulty Breathing

Shortness of breath is common for people with lung cancer. Breathing can be uncomfortable and you may feel like you can't get enough air into your lungs. It can feel scary but this can happen even when the levels of oxygen in the blood are normal. Some causes of shortness of breath may be related to your cancer and others may not.

It is important to call your healthcare team if you have any concerns about your breathing. They will be able to find the cause of your shortness of breath and offer the right kind of help.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage shortness of breath:

- Stay away from smoky places. If you smoke, try to cut back. Your healthcare team can help.
- Try light exercise, if possible. Exercise can help improve the flow of oxygen to your blood.
- Sleeping with your head raised (on pillows) may help you breathe easier.

- Manage anxiety by taking slow, steady, deep breaths and try to picture a setting that relaxes and calms you. Try to stay focused on the setting and breathe slowly.
- Try breathing exercises. Breathe in through your nose for 4 counts. Hold your breath for four counts. Blow out slowly through pursed lips for a count of eight. "Smell the roses, blow out the candle."
- Using a handheld fan activates facial nerves and can help you feel like you can breathe easier.

Common medications:

- Medications used in an inhaler (a tool used to breathe in medications).
- Medications used in a nebulizer (turns liquid medicine into a mist that is breathed in).
- Oxygen

It is important to tell your healthcare team right away if you are having difficulty breathing. If you are having shortness of breath, that is NOT an emergency, talk to your healthcare team about whether oxygen or an incentive spirometer (a tool designed to increase lung function) might help you.



Skin Reaction

Some cancer treatments, such as radiation and immunotherapy, can cause skin reactions that range from mild to severe. You may notice a rash, redness, very dry skin, changes in your nails or changes in your hair.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage skin reactions:

- Use mild soaps, pat your skin dry and use a good sensitive skin moisturizer even before a rash appears.
- Protect your skin from heat and cold.
- Protect your skin from the sun.
- Wear loose, soft clothing.
- Use a baby oil spray to reach the skin on your back.
- Avoid using skin products right before your radiation treatment.

Common medications:

- Steroid cream
- Antibiotic
- Antihistamine

Throat Soreness

A sore throat may happen if you are having radiation to your chest. Radiation can cause your throat to become inflamed which makes it feel sore or you may have some soreness when trying to swallow. It is even more common if you are having chemotherapy and radiation at the same time.

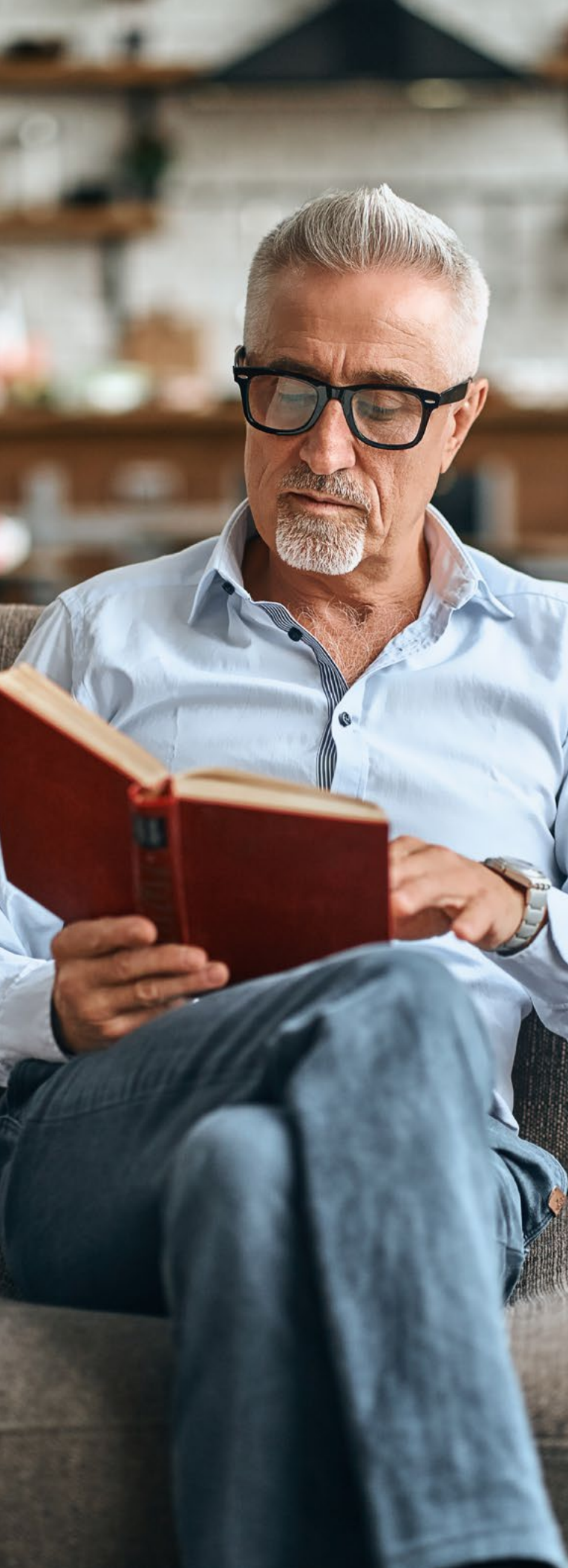
Helpful tips to prevent and manage throat soreness:

- Eat soft, smooth foods.
- Take small bites and chew your food very well before you swallow.
- Avoid eating spicy, citrus or acidic foods.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Stay away from smoky places. If you smoke, try to cut back. Your healthcare team can help.
- Try cold foods or foods that are just warm.
- Eat small meals throughout the day instead of three big meals.

Common medications:

- Over-the-counter pain medicine
- Throat drops
- Lidocaine
- Magic mouthwash

It is important to tell your healthcare team right away if you are not able to eat or drink due to your sore throat.



Trouble Sleeping

Even though your cancer treatment may make you feel very tired, you still may have trouble sleeping. This can be due to other medicines in your chemotherapy “cocktail,” stress, anxiety or even extra napping during the day. It is good to think about your sleep habits and try to see what may be causing the problem.

Helpful tips to prevent and manage difficulty sleeping:

- Go to bed and wake up in the morning at the same time each day.
- Stay away from caffeine and alcohol before bedtime.
- Avoid eating, exercising, or using your cell phone, tablet, or computer for at least 2 hours before bedtime.
- Choose a restful task before bed such as taking a warm bath, reading, listening to soft music or meditation.
- Make sure your bedroom is cool and dark.
- Limit naps to no longer than an hour each day.
- Try a weighted blanket. The weight of the blanket should be no more than 10% of your body weight.
- Repeating sounds may help calm an active mind and help you fall asleep. Try a metronome set at 60 BPM or music tuned at 432hz, a fan or sound machine.

Common medications:

- Trazodone
- Melatonin
- Benadryl (diphenhydramine)



There is Help for Side Effects from Your Treatment

If you have side effects from treatment, work with your healthcare team, ask about palliative care and try some of the tips inside this brochure. Finding ways to manage your side effects is empowering and can bring a sense of control back to your life. Challenge yourself to try something new or different...it may be just the thing that works for you!

If you have any questions or would like support, please contact the GO2 Foundation Helpline at 800-298-2436 or support@go2foundation.org.

Side Effects Tracker

You may use this form to track your symptoms and share it with your healthcare team. If you have a symptom that can be seen, like swelling or a rash, take a picture. Your healthcare team can use the photo to see if the symptom has gotten better or worse over time.

Date/ Time	What symptoms or side effect are you having?	Rate the side effect 1=mild, 2=medium, 3=severe	What made it better? What made it worse?	Did you take all medicines as prescribed today?

Urgent - Talk to your healthcare team right away if you have any of these symptoms that are new or getting worse:

- Trouble breathing, chest pain, dizziness, fainting.
- Diarrhea with bad cramping or pain, blood in the stool or urine, or dark urine.
- Changes in vision, memory, or thinking skills.
- Swelling in in any part of the body.

Emergency Contacts

Patient's name

Address

.....

In an Emergency Call 911

	Name and Relationship	Phone Number
First Emergency Contact		
Second Emergency Contact		
	Name	Phone Number
Primary Care Doctor		
Medical Oncologist (cancer doctor)		
Radiation Oncologist (cancer radiation doctor)		
Pharmacy/Drug Store		
Other		



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