

Flu-like Symptoms

Flu-like symptoms are a common occurrence of some oncology therapies and usually begin at the onset of therapy. These symptoms are usually mild to moderate in severity and may diminish as your therapy continues. The incidence of symptoms peaks during the first few administrations of the drug and tends to gradually lessen thereafter. Remember, flu-like symptoms, such as fever and chills, are expected side effects of some oncology therapies. Your doctor may prescribe an analgesic for your aches or fever which may be taken at the same time as therapy to prevent fever or muscle aches.

Exercise, such as walking or low-impact aerobics, may help your aches and pains.

If you experience flu-like symptoms, remember:

- > By giving yourself the injection shortly before bedtime, you may be able to “sleep through” the flu-like symptoms.
- > Be sure to drink enough water, at least 8 to ten 8-oz glasses per day. Remember this simple calculation: your weight in pounds divided by 2 equals the number of fluid ounces needed daily.
- > Drink water, but no alcohol, and limit caffeinated beverages.
- > Record and report temperature elevations, chills, general discomfort, and other symptoms.

Fever and Chills

- > Acetaminophen may help reduce fever and other flu-like symptoms. Ask your doctor before taking additional medicine.
- > You may experience a high-grade fever. If your fever is over 104°F or does not come down with a fever-reducing medicine (such as acetaminophen), notify your doctor.
- > For fever, try a tepid sponge bath or an ice pack with your physician’s agreement.
- > If you develop chills, wrap up in blankets or warm towels.

Headaches

- > Headaches can have many causes: not drinking enough water, a history of migraines, high blood pressure, dental problems/jaw pain, allergies, not eating enough, sinus infection, alcohol intake, stress, interrupted sleep, hormonal changes, anemia, caffeine or caffeine “withdrawal,” or eye problems. Discuss with your physician what might be causing your headache.
- > Do not consume alcohol.
- > Avoid coffee and other caffeinated drinks.
- > Keep lights dim and avoid noise.
- > Check with your eye doctor—you may need glasses or a new prescription.
- > Ask your physician for a thorough neurological examination if your headache is severe.

Muscle Aches and Arthritis-type Pain

- > Try to remember if you had a similar problem before starting treatment.
- > Your treatment for fever (an over-the-counter analgesic such as acetaminophen) may reduce muscle aches. Consult your physician to find out what is best for you.
- > Exercise, such as walking or low-impact aerobics, may help your aches and pains. Consult your physician before starting any exercise program.
- > Warm soaks, compresses, or massage might help muscles relax.
- > Arthritis-type pain is felt in the joints at rest or during activity. The joints most commonly affected are usually the weight-bearing ones (eg, knees and ankles). This type of pain tends to persist after other flu-like symptoms have abated.
- > Joint pain is treated similarly to muscle pain, but can be symptomatic of something more serious. Ask your doctor what can be done to help you.

Cough and Congestion

- > Any respiratory symptoms such as cough and congestion should be reported to your doctor.
- > Do not take over-the-counter antihistamines or cough suppressants unless your physician advises you to do so.

The ABCs of Managing Flu-like Symptoms

- > To remember the various things you can try to relieve your symptoms, go through your ABCs.
 - A**cetaminophen
 - B**edtime (evening) Administration
 - C**onserve Energy
 - D**rink Plenty of Fluids
 - E**at Balanced Meals
 - F**ocus on the Positive

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice. Consult your health care provider for individualized information about your therapy. Your health care provider should be your primary source of information about your medical condition and treatment.