

Physical Concerns - Fevers

Internet version of this handout with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/fever>

Contact your health care provider immediately, day or night, if you should experience any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher
or
- Shaking chills (possible signs of infection)

A fever may be a sign of an infection. If you get a fever during your chemotherapy treatment, it may be a medical emergency. Fever may be the only sign that you have an infection, and an infection during chemotherapy can be life-threatening. Sometimes a very low temperature (94-95 °F) while feeling very sick can also be a sign of infection. Make sure you have an idea of when it is important for you to contact your doctor or seek immediate attention. Often it's better to err on the side of caution, because sometimes symptoms are easier to treat and can be managed more effectively earlier rather than later. Typically your oncology on-call service is equipped to handle these calls 24/7.

Any time you feel warm, flushed, chilled, or not well you should take your temperature. If you have a fever of 100.4° F (38° C) or above, *or* a body temperature of 95° or below, *call your doctor right away*, even if it happens in the middle of the night.

You should also—

- Keep a working thermometer (w/ new battery if battery powered) in a convenient location, know how to use it.
- Know your temperature before you call the on call doctor so that you can report the number to the provider immediately.
- Keep your doctor's phone numbers with you at all times. Make sure you know what number to call for when their office is open and when closed.
- *If you have to go to the emergency room, tell the person checking you in that you are a cancer patient undergoing chemotherapy.* If you have a fever, you might have an infection in the setting of a very low white blood cell count. This is a life-threatening condition, and you should be seen quickly.

Prevention of fevers and infection –

- Clean your hands with soap and water and/or hand sanitizer:
 - before, during and after cooking
 - before and after you eat
 - after going to the bathroom
 - after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
 - after touching or cleaning up after pet; after touching trash
 - before and after caring for a wound
 - before and after caring for your port, catheter port or other access device.

Encourage visitors, family, friends who have a fever, diarrhea, a cough, or the flu to maintain contact only by phone until they are well again. Ask your health care team if you have further questions.

Relieving side effects is an important part of cancer care and treatment. This is called symptom management or palliative care. Talk with your health care team about any symptoms you experience and any change in symptoms.

Adapted from: <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/preventinfections/fever.htm> and https://www.nccn.org/patients/resources/life_with_cancer/managing_symptoms/emergency_room.aspx

Resources for Additional Information:

- [NCCN, When to Go to the Emergency Room](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Fever](#)
- [CDC, Prepare: Watch out for Fever](#)
- [NIH, NCI Infection and Neutropenia](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Infection](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Neutropenia and Infections](#)
- [Chemocare, Fever, Neutropenic Fever, and their Relationship to Chemotherapy](#)

Información Española

- [American Cancer Society, Fiebre](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Sudoración](#)
- [Chemocare, Fiebre, fiebre neutropénica y su relación con la quimioterapia](#)
- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Infección y neutropenia](#)