



## **GETTING THE BEST FROM CHEMOTHERAPY WITHOUT THE WORST OF CHEMOTHERAPY**

Maybe it is just that we are involved with people who have cancer, but these days it seems cancer is everywhere. It has become common to meet people who are being treated with drugs to remove cancer from their body. I would love to tell each of them that there is help to reduce the side effects and help assure a better outcome. Thank goodness for support groups like Breast Buds that help get the word out.

Study of the literature in recognized journals such as Cancer, Journal of Clinical Oncology, and International Journal of Cancer has given me the information to develop well substantiated treatment plans. Both by the type of chemotherapy and by the patients' symptoms there are plans to make the journey easier.

Breast cancer is most often treated with Adriamycin (Doxorubicin), Cytosan (cyclophosphamide) and Taxotere or Taxol. I will refer to them as "AC" and Taxanes.

Did you know glutamine has been proven to help reduce side effects from all of these drugs? AC can cause mouth sores called stomatitis. Glutamine powder is mixed in liquid and "swished" in the mouth before swallowing to prevent and treat mouth sores. Four to six grams in divided doses through the day would be safe for most people. Glutamine has also been shown to reduce burning mouth syndrome and neuropathy from the Taxanes. I always suggest combining glutamine with liquid Traumeel by BHI. BHI, a German company, published effectiveness studies on Traumeel with cancer related stomatitis showing great results. My patients can tell you it is very effective. I urge my patients to start this right away and continue daily throughout their treatment. It really does work. I have even seen it heal mouth ulcers in patients who did not take it in the beginning of treatment. As soon as they began glutamine and Traumeel the sores began to heal. It was wonderful.

The heart muscle can be damaged by chemotherapy; causing problems even years later. Fortunately there are well-known heart protective nutrients. Coenzyme Q 10 is my favorite heart protection for breast cancer patients because it has been shown in small studies to fight the breast cancer. The dose is rather high at 300 mg. daily.

A multiple vitamin with the RDA of antioxidants (Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Selenium, and Zinc) should be used. High quality is necessary, but not high levels of these nutrients. This will increase effectiveness of the drug and decrease toxicity. When in doubt consult a naturopathic physician or other practitioner who is an expert in oncology and nutrition. It is time consuming to keep up with the literature studies so someone who specializes is more likely to be helpful.

The food choices you make can also help. If you have nausea your old comfort foods may be all you tolerate for a day or two. Do not try new foods or foods you do not prefer during chemo or you may develop aversion to them. Once the nausea is controlled there are many helpful foods. Green tea is high on the list of beneficial drinks along with plenty of water. Highly colored fruits and vegetables such as blueberries, yams, broccoli or carrots will help you maintain your energy. If you enjoy fish the studies have shown beneficial outcome if you eat fish more often. Ground flax meal is helpful as are whole grains and nuts. You may try mixing these as a breakfast muesli.

Nausea can be effectively treated with herbs such as ginger and peppermint, essential oils tangerine and peppermint infused into the room, and homeopathic medicine specific to the case or try Nux vomica. Acupuncture is extremely effective and the National Institutes of Health supports the use of Acupuncture for the nausea.

My patients tell me after the chemotherapy they feel rather like the flu. They also tell me that the acupuncture rapidly helps resolve this sensation. I recommend my patients schedule ahead with me to receive acupuncture directly after each chemotherapy session. Often that is enough to keep symptoms away. Acupuncture helps with anxiety, sleep, pain and energy as well as the nausea.

Last, but not least, consider taking some time for yourself now. Begin meditation, prayer time, guided imagery or yoga. Have tea with a friend. Join a support group and make new friends. Go back to a favorite art expression, writing, or try something new. Do something you have dreamed of doing or just keep putting off. As the saying goes: "Yes, you are worth it!"

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