

HEALTH TIP SHEET

FRIENDS, FAMILY, & PUBLIC PLACES



Crowds and Public Places

When undergoing chemotherapy, if you feel up to it, it is generally fine to visit public places. Just remember your immune system is weaker than usual and it may be harder for your body to fight off infections. If you do go out, try to avoid situations where you might come into close contact with people who may be sick. For example, eating at a restaurant or going to a movie is OK, but you should try to avoid a situation where you are in a crowd.

This is especially important:

- Between 7 and 12 days after receiving each chemotherapy treatment—and possibly lasting up to one week—(sometimes called the nadir) when your immune system is likely to be at its weakest and you are at the greatest risk for picking up germs. Be sure to ask your doctor or nurse when your immune system is likely to be at its weakest.
- During cold and flu season, when more people are sick.

To further protect yourself, you should wash your hands or use hand sanitizers when you return home to get rid of any germs you might have picked up.

What is Nadir?

Chemotherapy treatment will usually involve a number of chemotherapy doses (sometimes called cycles). The period of time beginning 7–12 days after you finish each chemotherapy dose—and possibly lasting up to one week—is when you have the fewest white blood cells in your body. Because of this, it will be extra hard for your body to fight off germs during this time.

This period of time is sometimes referred to as nadir, which means “lowest point”. For example, if you have chemotherapy on August 7, you are at highest risk of picking up an infection between August 14 and August 19. This period varies slightly depending upon the chemotherapy drug, or combination of drugs, used.

What Can You Do During Your Nadir?

- Find out from your doctor and/or nurse exactly when your white blood cell count will be at its lowest.
- Be extra careful during this time.
- Try to remember to take your temperature every evening, and call your doctor if you have a temperature of 100.4°F or higher for more than 1 hour, or a one-time temperature of 101°F or higher.

Spending Time With Friends and Family

Your friends and family are a big part of your support system, and spending time with them is important. Keep in mind that unless a friend or family member is sick or highly contagious, most doctors and nurses agree that the benefits of spending time with your friends and family outweigh the risks.

To help prevent you from picking up germs, you can ask friends and family to wash their hands when visiting you. You can also consider keeping hand sanitizer at home and asking family members and visitors to use it.

If you are receiving chemotherapy, you may be at risk for getting an infection. Take the right steps toward preventing infections during cancer treatment by visiting www.PreventCancerInfections.org



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