Coping with Treatment Related Side Effects

Debra Winkeljohn, RN, CNS
Lovelace Cancer Care
Why Are There Side Effects?

- Cancer Symptoms
- Surgery Symptoms
- Chemotherapy Symptoms
- Radiation Symptoms
- Other Medications
General or “Whole Body Symptoms”

- Poor Appetite
- Weight Gain
- Edema
  - Lymphedema
- Fatigue
- Pain
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
Appetite Loss Causes

- Cancer
- Chemotherapy
- Radiation
- Mouth Symptoms
- Generalized Pain
- Depression
- Fear of symptoms
Appetite Loss
Possible Solutions

• East small frequent meals
• Nutritious, high calorie foods; easy to eat
• Drink water between rather than with meals.
• Have family prepare favorite foods ahead
• Control other symptoms that may contribute to poor eating.
Edema

• Causes- Cancer, Kidney, Heart or Liver

• Solutions
  – Reduce salt
  – Exercise
  – Elevate affected area
  – Wear compression devices
  – Diuretics
Fatigue

• Exercise
• Conserve Energy
• Control causes of fatigue if possible
Pain

• Address the source of the pain
• Change the perception of pain with meds
• Interfere with pain signals-Nerve blocks
• Non Medication Pain Relief
  – Physical therapy
  – Relaxation, hypnosis, biofeedback
  – Acupuncture
Insomnia

• Address cause of insomnia
• Avoid caffeine, alcohol and tobacco
• Exercise
• Bedtime ritual—reading
• Relaxation techniques
• Sleep restriction during day
Anxiety

• Try to recognize your fear
• Talk with your doctor
• Avoid behaviors that make anxiety worse
• Practice relaxation
Specific Organ System Symptoms
Hair Loss

- Not Preventable
- Planning and learning to deal with probable hair loss helps
- Short Hair Cut
- Getting Wig, Hats, and Scarves
Hand Foot Syndrome

- Limit exposure to hot water and direct sun
- Avoid unnecessary friction including rubbing, use of tools and repetitive exercise
- Elevate hands and feet and apply cool compresses
- Use gentle moisturizers
Skin Reactions

• Allergic reactions

• Reactions due to Monoclonal Antibody or Tyrosine Kinase Inhibitor Therapy
  – Report the reaction to your doctor
  – Use mild unscented soaps
  – Avoid Sun Exposure
Digestive System

• Mucositis - Mouth Sores or Dry Mouth
• Nausea
• Diarrhea
• Constipation
Mouth Sores/Dry Mouth

• Visit a dentist before starting treatment
• Rinse mouth frequently and drink lots of water
• Avoid alcohol, caffeine and acidic foods/juices
• Avoid hot food or drink
Nausea

- Prevention with medications
- Distraction, relaxation
- Small frequent meals
- Bland diet
Diarrhea

- Avoid Dehydration by drinking water and avoiding caffeine, alcohol
- Avoid fatty or acidic foods
- Antidiarrheal medications
Constipation

- Increase fluids
- Add more fiber to diet or with psyllium
- Consider stool softeners and laxatives
- Increase physical activity
Neurologic

• Memory Problems
  Use a calendar, post reminders
  Brain strengthening activities
  Physical activity
Hot Flashes

• Exercise, Deep Breathing and Relaxation
• Low Dose Antidepressants
• Nonhormonal Medications and Supplements
Sexual Side Effects

Women
– Vaginal dryness
– Decreased Sexual Desire

Men
Decreased Sexual Desire or potency
Bone Marrow

Thrombocytopenia
Neutropenia
Anemia
Bone Changes

• Osteoporosis
• Hypercalcemia
• Risk of fracture
Late Effects of Radiation

- Cataracts
- Cavities and tooth decay
- Heart problems
- Hypothyroidism
- Infertility
- Lung disease
- Intestinal problems
- Memory problems
- Second primary cancers
Late Effects of Chemotherapy

Cataracts
Infertility
Liver problems
Lung disease
Osteoporosis
Reduced lung capacity
Second primary cancers
Long Term and Late Effects of Surgery

- Lymphedema
- Scars and Chronic Pain
Recovery