

# Preparing for chemotherapy

Chemotherapy treats cancer, slowing the growth and multiplication of cancer cells to combat the often fatal disease. Cancer cells grow and multiply faster than other cells in the body. While chemotherapy proves to be a viable method for addressing various cancer forms, it also has the potential for side effects. Some chemotherapy side effects are mild and treatable, while others can cause serious complications. The term *chemotherapy* is often used without people knowing what it involves. According to [Mayo Clinic](#), chemotherapy (or chemo) is usually a drug treatment that uses powerful chemicals to combat and kill fast-growing cells in the body.

Issued by [Stone](#) 12 Jun 2023



## How to prepare for chemotherapy

Despite the potential side effects, chemotherapy has been an effective, reliable cancer treatment for decades. Chemo can get rid of cancer entirely, or it can help you have a better quality of life by reducing symptoms. Chemotherapy can also make other treatments, such as surgery or radiation therapy, more effective.

Preparing well for chemo treatment will help you feel less stressed before and during the process and can even help ease side effects. By running several tests, your oncologist will ensure you are healthy enough for treatment. In the meantime, you can [take steps](#) to prepare for chemo. The more prepared you are, the more comfortable you will be.

**Learn about your treatment** - Ask your oncologist about the specific chemo drugs you will receive, including their benefits and potential side effects. Ask about resources where you can learn as much as possible about your treatment. Knowing more about your treatment can help you plan for side effects and how you can take proactive measures before the treatment even starts. For example, if you are aware of the likelihood of experiencing hair loss, you can arrange to get a customised wig made.

**Know your treatment routine** - Ask your oncologist what your treatment environment will be and how long it will take. Use this information to plan your treatment. For example, if it will take long then you should ask whether you can consume beverages or a meal during treatment and also plan to take a good book to read or download videos on a tablet.

**Eating habits** – Having a [healthy diet](#) and maintaining weight before treatment helps you stay strong and lower your risk of infection. It will also help to stock up on foods that need little or no cooking, like frozen dinners and ready-to-eat foods, for days you do not feel well enough to cook.

**Visit a dentist** - Common chemotherapy side effects include dental impact, mouth sores and changes in your taste buds, often making eating difficult. You also don't want to navigate dental problems while battling cancer. Ensure your teeth are healthy and your mouth has no infections before starting chemo treatment.

**Ask about fertility** - Some types of chemo can affect your fertility. If you are planning a family, talk to your oncologist about your options before chemo begins.

**Organise help at home** – If you are experiencing adverse side effects and have young children requiring care, it is crucial to arrange assistance before treatment. Asking friends or family members for support will make things easier.

**Make arrangements at work** – It may be necessary to adjust your work schedule during chemotherapy. Depending on your job, you might need to explore options like remote work or taking time off. Ask your oncologist how treatments will likely impact your ability to do your job. You can make appropriate arrangements with your employer based on your oncologist's guidance.

**Ease financial stress** – The treatment costs can be stressful for many cancer patients. Having a healthcare partner will help ease financial stress. All Medshield Medical Scheme plans provide oncology [benefits](#). Medshield has a partnership with [Oncology Network \(ICON\)](#). Icon Oncology Holdings is a private healthcare company and the leading provider of radiation and managed care oncology services in South Africa. ICON Chemotherapy pioneered the move to value-based care (VBC) in cancer treatment on the African continent. VBC reduces costs, improves patient outcomes and drives sustainability in the medical industry. The Icon Oncology model serves all members of medical schemes in the industry, irrespective of the available benefits of individual funding options.

**Confirm the terms of your medical aid cover** - Medshield provides access to post-active treatment for 36 months. Cancer is a Prescribed Minimum Benefit and is thus covered according to the Scheme rules and chosen benefit option, and is subject to the submission of a treatment plan and registration on the Oncology Managed Care Programme.

At Medshield, we believe in supporting the well-being of your entire family by encouraging them to live healthy lifestyles. As your healthcare *Partner For Life*, we offer tailored and cost-effective cover regardless of your life stage. We understand that good health is vital and requires careful financial planning. Therefore, we continuously evaluate and regularly enhance our range of plans and benefits, ensuring that you can keep *Living Assured*.

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