

Immunotherapy for Cancer

Immunotherapy helps a person's immune system find and attack cancer cells. It uses substances made by the body or in a lab to stimulate or boost the immune system so it works better against cancer. Immunotherapy is used to treat some types of cancer, but not everyone who has cancer will get it.



How does immunotherapy work?

The immune system uses certain body organs and cells to help protect a person against diseases and other illnesses, including some cancers. Different types of immunotherapy work in different ways to help find and destroy cancer cells.

Some immunotherapy drugs help the immune system work harder so it can find cancer cells and stop them from growing and spreading. Other types can change how the immune system works so it attacks cancer cells better.

Immunotherapy might be the only treatment needed for some cancers. Or it can be given with other treatments like chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or surgery.



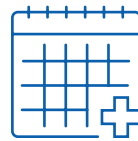
How is it given?

Many immunotherapy treatments are given as an injection or infusion through an IV line that is put into a vein. Some can be rubbed on the skin or given directly into a part of the body where cancer is found. Others are given by mouth as a pill or capsule.



Where do people go to get immunotherapy?

Immunotherapy is often given in an outpatient clinic or treatment center. Some newer types of immunotherapy might require a hospital stay. Other types can be taken at home.



How often is treatment given, and how long does it last?

Because each person's treatment is different, how often it is given and how long it lasts can be different, too. Treatment might be given every day for a few days or might be given once a week or once a month. Some types of immunotherapy are given for a period of time, followed by a period of rest so the body can respond to treatment and recover before the next treatment.



Getting ready for immunotherapy

If immunotherapy is part of your treatment, talk with your cancer care team about what to expect. This will help you plan for changes in your work or family schedule if needed.



Side effects of immunotherapy

The side effects of immunotherapy may be different for each person. They depend on the type and dose of immunotherapy a person gets, as well as their type of cancer, its location, and their general health.

Most side effects are mild. But some can be severe. Some common side effects include:

- Skin changes (rashes)
- Feeling tired (fatigue)
- Flu-like symptoms (such as fever, chills, and muscle aches)
- Stomach problems (nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea)

It's important to know the possible side effects of the type of immunotherapy you are getting, so you know what to watch for and can talk with your cancer care team about preventing and relieving them.



Questions to ask

Here are some questions you can ask your doctor and cancer care team:

- What type of immunotherapy will I get?
- How often will I get treatment?
- How long will my treatment last?
- Where will I go to get my treatment?
- Can I drive myself to treatment?
- Will my insurance pay for my treatment? How much will I have to pay?
- What side effects could I have?
- How can my side effects be managed, and what can I do about them?
- Will I be able to work and do my regular activities during treatment?
- Can I continue taking my other medicines and supplements during treatment?
- Will I need other types of treatment?
- When should I call the doctor or nurse?



To learn more about immunotherapy for cancer, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/immunotherapy or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.