

Immunotherapy for Cancer

Immunotherapy uses certain parts of a person's immune system to treat diseases such as cancer. It is used to treat some types of cancer, but not everyone who has cancer will get immunotherapy.



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.

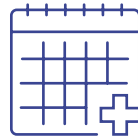
Some immunotherapy drugs help the immune system work harder so it can find cancer cells and stop them from growing and spreading. Other types can change how the immune system works so it attacks cancer cells better.

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



How is it given?

Many immunotherapy treatments are given at outpatient clinics 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. Some newer immunotherapy treatments might require a hospital stay. Others are given by mouth as a pill or capsule and can be taken at home.



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

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 recover from side effects before the next treatment is due.



Side effects of immunotherapy

Because side effects depend on the drug that's given, not everyone getting immunotherapy will have the same side effects.

Some types of immunotherapy can cause serious or very serious side effects. Some common side effects include:

- Skin problems like rashes or itchiness
- Flu-like symptoms
- Stomach problems like diarrhea



Questions to ask

Here are some questions you can ask your doctor and health 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 medications and supplements during treatment?
- Will I need other types of treatment?
- When should I call the doctor or nurse?

For cancer information, day-to-day help, and support, call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** or visit us online at **cancer.org/immunotherapy**.
We're here when you need us.



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