

Talking to your care team about physical symptoms when you're being treated for cancer.

It's important to know when to reach out to your health care team while you're being treated for cancer. In this short guide, **Dr. Jennifer Cho** from Color helps you understand which symptoms and situations require immediate attention and who to talk to when.



Q: What types of side effects should I expect during cancer treatment?

It is common to experience side effects when you're being treated for cancer with chemotherapy, immunotherapy, radiation, or even after surgery. Sometimes these symptoms might feel like flu-like symptoms (e.g. fever, chills, nausea) and may be normal. Other times side effects may indicate a more serious concern, such as a blood clot. Knowing which symptoms to look out for can help you and your doctors manage any unpleasant side effects and get ahead of any serious complications.

Q: I'm currently in cancer treatment. What specific symptoms or side effects should prompt me to call my doctor?

Cancer and cancer treatment can often cause side effects that require medical attention, making it difficult to know when to contact your doctor.

You should reach out to your care team **immediately** if you experience any of the following symptoms:

<p>Severe Pain: Any severe or persistent pain not relieved by a medication prescribed to you by your doctor</p>	<p>High Fever: A temperature above 100.4°F that persists or recurs</p>	<p>Uncontrolled Nausea or Vomiting: Inability to keep food or fluids down, leading to dehydration</p>	<p>Unusual Bleeding or Bruising: Any unexplained or excessive bleeding, bruising, or petechiae (small red or purple spots on the body)</p>	<p>Difficulty Breathing: Shortness of breath, wheezing, or any respiratory distress</p>
<p>Infections: Signs of infection such as redness, warmth, swelling, or discharge from any site, or if you develop a persistent cough or sore throat</p>	<p>Swelling: Sudden or severe swelling in the arms, legs, face, or abdomen</p>	<p>Severe Fatigue: Extreme or debilitating fatigue that significantly impacts your daily activities</p>	<p>Neurological Symptoms: New or worsening headaches, confusion, dizziness, loss of balance, or seizures</p>	<p>Skin Changes: Any new rashes, severe itching, or other skin changes that concern you</p>

Q: How do I know if my symptoms are ‘serious enough’ to contact my doctor?

If you're wondering whether your symptoms are serious enough to call your doctor, it's always better to be safe than sorry. You should reach out if you have new, severe, or ongoing symptoms that worry you. Things like chest pain, trouble breathing, sudden weakness, severe headache, or anything that really disrupts your daily life are good reasons to call. Also, if your symptoms are getting worse or not getting better, it's time to check in with your doctor. It's always okay to ask for help and make sure everything is alright.

Q: Who should I call when I'm experiencing these side effects?

When experiencing side effects from treatment, knowing who to contact can help you get the best care quickly.



Your oncologist

Contact your oncologist if you're having any side effects directly related to your cancer treatment. They can address issues like nausea, fatigue, pain, or reactions to chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Your oncologist is also the person to contact for severe or concerning symptoms, such as high fever, severe pain, or sudden changes in your health and can also advise on when emergency care is needed.



Your Primary Care Physician (PCP) or Color Care Team

If you have a PCP, they will be able to talk to you about general health concerns or if you need support managing chronic conditions that are not directly related to your cancer treatment. Your PCP might be the one who helps to coordinate your overall care and manage other medications you might be taking. If so, consider reaching out to them first or at least keeping them informed.

Q: Other than experiencing side effects, when else should I reach out to my care team while I'm in cancer treatment?

Having an open line of communication with your care team is one of the best ways to stay in control and prepared to manage challenges that often come along with treatment. Aside from side effects, you can and should reach out to your care team if you have medication concerns (e.g., you miss a dose or are having trouble taking a prescribed medication), have questions about your treatment plan, or are in need of mental health support. You can also reach out to different members of your healthcare team regularly to update them or ask questions about new test results and changes in your health. Keeping them updated about your health can help them monitor your progress and make any adjustments to your care plan.

Additionally, care advocates at Color are experts in navigating the healthcare system, coordinating appointments, and assisting with insurance and financial issues. They can also help connect you with additional resources or provide more guidance about which healthcare provider on your team is best to talk to.