

Looking for more information on this topic?

You can contact the Canadian Cancer Society at www.cancer.ca or call the Cancer Information Service of the Cancer Society at 1-888-939-3333. You can also contact your local public library for books, videos, magazine articles and online health information. For a list of public libraries in Nova Scotia go to <http://publiclibraries.ns.ca>.

Cancer Care Nova Scotia has made an electronic patient education program, the Oncology Interactive Education Series (OIES), available in most health districts in Nova Scotia. Please check with your health care team, your Cancer Patient Navigator, or your health care library to see if this program is available in your district and to learn how to use the program.

For more information visit *Cancer Care Nova Scotia's* website www.cancercare.ns.ca



Capital Health

Developed by: Oncology Clinical Educators, Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre, Capital District Health Authority in partnership with the Living Well With Cancer Board.

Approved by: Nova Scotia Cancer Patient Education Committee, *Cancer Care Nova Scotia*.

CG85-0991 Rev 01/2010

Combination therapy uses more than one cancer treatment to treat your cancer. This means that you may have:

- Surgery and radiation therapy;
- Surgery and chemotherapy;
- Radiation therapy and chemotherapy; or
- Surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy.

How does combination therapy work?

To understand combination therapy, you first need to know how each kind of cancer treatment works:

- **Surgery** and **radiation therapy** treat cancers that affect one part of your body (such as your breast).
- **Chemotherapy** treats cancer cells that have spread throughout your body (such as leukemias) or cancer cells that have moved from one place (such as your prostate gland) to another place (such as your bones).

Sometimes, your doctor will suggest that you have radiation therapy and/or chemotherapy to shrink the cancer **before** you have surgery. In other cases, doctors will suggest that you have the chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy **after** surgery to kill any cancer cells that may have been left behind.

Combination therapy can:

- Cure your cancer.
- Control your cancer for awhile.
- Reduce the risk of cancer coming back.
- Help you get rid of or cope with cancer symptoms, such as pain.

(Please see the fact sheets on Chemotherapy, Radiation Therapy, and Surgery to learn more about each of these treatments.)

Why is combination therapy best for me?

For some cancers, combination therapy is the best treatment. Your health care team will explain why and what kind of combination therapy is best for you.

How is combination therapy given?

How and where you get your treatments depends on the kinds of treatments that you will be having.

What are the side effects of combination therapy?

Some cancer treatments may cause side effects. Some people do not have any side effects; other people may have a few or many side effects. No one knows exactly which side effects you might have until you begin your treatment.

Your health care team will give you details about the side effects that you might have and how to cope with them.

Please keep in mind that side effects are not a sign of how well the treatment worked against your cancer.

How can I cope with my cancer and treatment?

It is normal for you and your family to have many feelings at this time. Talk with your doctor, nurse, or someone else on your health care team about your feelings.

All team members will answer your questions and help you.

Questions to ask your health care team

- What combination of cancer treatments is best for me and why?
- What are the benefits and risks of these treatments to me?
- How and where will I get the treatments?
- Who can be with me during my treatments?
- How will we know if the treatments worked?
- Will I be able to go to work when I'm having these treatments?
- Can I keep doing the things that I used to do? What should I not do?
- Will the treatments affect whether or not I can have children?
- Can I travel or take a vacation when I'm having the treatments?
- How often will I see my cancer doctor during my treatments?
- What happens when the treatments end?