



Concerns about Tobacco and Substance Use

If you smoke or use any other substances (alcohol, drugs, medications not prescribed for you), it is important to tell your health care team so that you can work together to get the most out of your cancer treatment, manage any side effects and to avoid any potential complications. People with cancer who stop smoking or get treatment for drug or alcohol abuse experience many benefits that improve their cancer treatment and overall health and quality of life. If you are interested in help with substance abuse or want to stop smoking, your health care team can connect you to resources that will help you reach this goal.

Smoking

Quitting smoking anytime will have benefits to your overall health and may increase your overall chances of survival. Studies show that the longer the length of time between stopping smoking and the start of cancer treatment, the better your chance of recovery will be. Studies also show that if you stop smoking even after diagnosis, you can lower the risk of treatment side effects and possibly lower your risk of developing a second cancer.

To quit smoking, talk with your health care team about your tobacco use. Understanding your situation can help them determine the best course of treatment needed to help you stop smoking. You can ask your doctor about getting a referral to a professionally trained smoking cessation counselor or mental health counselor.

There are several organizations that will assist you if you decide you want to stop smoking:

www.smokefree.gov

National Cancer Institute toll free telephone Quit-line: (800) 784-8669

American Cancer Society Guide to Quitting Smoking and toll-free telephone Quit-line: (800) 227-2345

Alcohol, Prescription or Illegal Drug Abuse

In order to plan for the most effective treatment and to manage any side effects you may have it is very important that your health care team is aware of your history of using alcohol and other drugs especially illegal substances. Your health care team may ask you about your use of alcohol or illegal drugs but even if they do not ask, you should volunteer this information. Drugs and alcohol can interact with other medications you are taking or with your cancer treatment in ways that will prevent you from getting the most benefit.

You should not worry that you will be denied cancer treatment if you are honest about your substance abuse. Your team may encourage you to try to stop your use of these substances or limit the amounts in order to get the most benefit and limit side effects from treatment. If you are interested in getting help for addictions to alcohol or drugs, your health care team will help you locate treatment in your area.

You can also contact:

--The Drug Treatment Facility Locator toll free number (800) 662-4357

--Alcoholics Anonymous: www.aa.org

--Narcotics Anonymous: www.na.org