

Understanding Antibody-Drug Conjugates



Cancer treatments evolve all the time with new discoveries. One growing treatment option is the use of Antibody-Drug Conjugates (ADCs). This fact sheet provides an overview of ADCs and how they may be useful for you. It talks about side effects and ways to cope. It also includes information on where you can find resources for support.



To learn more about ADCs and ways to cope with cancer, visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Antibody-Drug-Conjugates.



WHAT ARE ANTIBODY-DRUG CONJUGATES?

Antibody-Drug Conjugates, or ADCs, are a type of cancer treatment. ADCs are a mix of two types of medicine. One part is a targeted therapy drug. The other part is a chemotherapy or “chemo” drug.

Targeted therapies help find cancer cells. They target specific changes in cancer cells. These changes may help cancer cells grow, divide, and spread. Targeted therapy drugs are designed to be more precise. They fight cancer cells while causing less harm to healthy cells in the body.

Chemo is often used to shrink tumors or stop the growth of cancer cells. Chemo may also help with any cancer symptoms. Chemo drugs are most effective at fighting fast-growing cells, like cancer cells. Traditional chemo is not precise. It may also harm fast-growing healthy cells. This may lead to unwanted side effects.

HOW DO ADCS WORK?

ADCs work by linking a monoclonal antibody to strong chemo drugs. This helps deliver the chemo directly to targeted cancer cells.

Monoclonal antibodies, or mAb, are a type of antibody made in a lab. They are designed to find and attach to specific proteins found in cancer cells. These proteins may be absent from healthy cells in the body.

During treatment with ADCs, the mAb leads the chemo right to the cancer cell. This treatment is more precise than traditional chemotherapy alone. This may lead to less damage to healthy cells in the body.

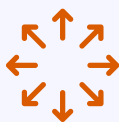


HOW ARE ADCS USED IN CANCER?

Your doctor may recommend ADCs as a treatment option if:



Cancer returns
(cancer
recurrence)



Cancer spreads or
progresses
(metastasize)



A person's first
diagnosis is stage IV
(4) cancer (“De novo”
metastatic cancer)



Other treatments
are not effective
or as effective

ADCs are not yet available for all types of cancer, but they are rapidly expanding. ADCs are currently used to treat certain blood cancers. These include acute lymphoblastic leukemia and multiple myeloma. ADCs are also used to treat some solid tumor cancers, like ovarian cancer and breast cancers.

To learn more about the other types of cancers ADCs are used to treat, visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Antibody-Drug-Conjugates.



COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

Cancer treatment can be complicated. It is always changing as new discoveries are made. You deserve a healthcare team you can trust to take the best care of you. Try to find doctors who have experience treating your type of cancer or understand newer treatments, like ADCs.

It is important that you can talk openly and honestly with your care team. Share your worries, ask questions, and speak up if something does not feel right. You should feel heard and supported during your cancer experience.

Talk with your care team to find out if treatment with ADCs is right for you. Ask about ADCs that are approved or still in clinical trials, and if they may be an option.

If you want to learn more about clinical trials on your own, visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Find-Clinical-Trial. CSC's Cancer Support Helpline can also be a resource as you explore your options.

CANCER SUPPORT HELPLINE

If you need help finding resources or want help getting information about your cancer or ADCs, call CSC's toll-free **Cancer Support Helpline® at 888-793-9355**. It is staffed by community navigators and resource specialists who can assist you Monday – Thursday 11:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m. ET and Friday 11:00 a.m.- 6:00 p.m. ET.

GETTING A SECOND OPINION

Cancer treatment can be complicated. It is important that your care team fully understands your cancer diagnosis and the best treatment options. You need a care team you can trust to provide the best care for you.

Getting a second opinion allows you to learn about all possible treatment options available. You can get a second opinion at any point in your care. Many people seek a second or even third opinion.

If you feel that your doctor is not addressing your needs or concerns, consider another care facility. Another care center or doctor may help you better understand your cancer and how to treat it. They may be closer to your home, have more support services, or have a connection to clinical trials.

Do not worry about hurt feelings. It is important that you feel comfortable with your treatment team. You can always return to your first doctor if you want. But remember, timely cancer treatment is key when deciding to seek multiple opinions.



TREATMENT PLANNING

Throughout the cancer experience, your voice and wishes should be central throughout the decision-making process. You might help choose the type of treatment, the timing of treatment, or the order of treatments. You may have the option to join a clinical trial. Making these choices is called “treatment planning”.

As you are making treatment decisions, think about what is important to you and any personal goals you may have. Let your care team know of any important family responsibilities or lifestyle values.

Talk with them about your needs and preferences. Ask about the goals of the treatment. Also ask how each treatment might affect your personal goals. Make sure you understand why one treatment might work better for you than another.

Making treatment decisions may feel overwhelming. Break your decision-making process into small steps by following these tips:

- 1** Think about your goals for treatment, your personal goals, and your life situation.
- 2** Work with your healthcare team to develop a specific, written treatment plan.
- 3** Remember that nurse practitioners, social workers, and patient navigators are there to support you.
- 4** Be selective about the information you find on the internet. Use proven, reliable sources.
- 5** Talk with others who have the same cancer as you or who considered ADCs as a treatment option. Remember everyone's cancer experience is unique, and your experience may differ from theirs.

For more information about making treatment decisions, visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Treatment-Decision-Process.



OPEN TO OPTIONS® If you are facing a cancer treatment decision, the Cancer Support Community's Open to Options program can help you prepare a list of personalized questions to share with your doctor. Our Open to Options® specialists can help you create a written list of specific questions about your treatment plan for your doctor. **Call 888-793-9355** to schedule an appointment or to find a Cancer Support Community near you.



NAVIGATING TREATMENT SIDE EFFECTS

Treatment with ADCs may lead to various side effects. These side effects will differ from person to person, due to:

Your overall health | Your type of cancer | The type of ADC treatment you receive

It is important to let your healthcare team know right away if you notice any side effects during treatment. Below are a few side effects that may appear when you are being treated with ADCs.

This is not an exhaustive list. It is important to talk with your doctor to learn more about the side effects of ADCs.

Anemia

Constipation

Diarrhea

Fatigue

Headaches

Nerve pain (neuropathy)

Keep in mind that you may not experience all of the side effects related to ADCs. There is also no connection between how severe your side effects are and the success of treatment.

Your healthcare team can help you monitor and manage any side effects. They can advise you on medications and strategies to reduce discomfort. Seeing a palliative care specialist can also help.

Visit **www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Cancer-Treatment-Side-Effects** for more information on managing treatment side effects.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Palliative care is a type of support that helps you feel better during or after cancer treatment. It focuses on relieving symptoms, like pain or fatigue. A palliative care specialist can help you manage any side effects and feel more comfortable.

Palliative care is different from hospice care. It is available at any point in the cancer experience. It can be available as early as the time of diagnosis. Palliative care is available for people with any stage of cancer. You can receive it at the same time as your cancer treatment. The goal of palliative care is to help you live as well as possible throughout your cancer experience.



COPING WITH THE COST OF CANCER TREATMENT

Cancer treatment, including treatment with ADCs, can be expensive. Many treatment centers have programs that may help cover the cost. If you are worried about how to pay for treatment, talk to your care team. Your care team may be able to connect you with a financial counselor or patient and/or nurse navigator. These experts can help you find funds for treatment, like grants or other resources for support.

If you are thinking about joining a clinical trial, ask the sponsoring facility or study team if there are any costs that may be covered. This can include the cost of the treatment or travel-related costs.

Before starting treatment, talk to your insurance provider or healthcare plan. Find out exactly what is covered and if there may be any out-of-pocket costs.

Connecting with patient advocacy organizations is helpful. They can connect you to patient assistance programs to help pay for travel costs and other support resources.

Call 888-793-9355 or visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Managing-Cost-Cancer-Treatment for support with managing cancer costs.



For more information and resources to support your caregiver(s), call 888-793-9355 or visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Caregivers.

SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS

Caregivers play such an important role in the cancer experience. They provide important physical, emotional, and logistical support. While this role can be rewarding, the responsibilities can often be stressful and take up a great deal of time. It is important that your caregiver(s) feel supported every step of the way.

As your caregiver navigates the cancer experience, remember:



Your healthcare team can provide resources. They can connect your caregiver(s) to other forms of support to help manage their duties.



It is important for your caregiver(s) to keep up with their own health needs. Setting time to care for themselves will greatly benefit you as well.



Caregivers can connect with others and exchange ideas on CSC's Caregiver Support discussion forum. Visit www.MyLifeLine.org.



COPING WITH THE IMPACT OF CANCER & MENTAL HEALTH

Living with cancer can be hard. It is common for cancer and its treatment to affect how you feel, both physically and emotionally. You might feel more tired, stressed, or overwhelmed. You may also find that things cost more or take more time. It might take a while before you can get back to doing the things you used to do.

Be sure to tell your care team if you notice any changes in how you feel—either physically or emotionally. They may connect you with helpful support, like a social worker or a mental health counselor. Talking to someone early on can help you develop the tools to feel better and stop symptoms from getting worse.

For more resources around coping with the mental impact of cancer, visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Coping-Mental-Health-Concerns.

FINDING SUPPORT

Having support during and after cancer treatment can make a big difference. Your needs may change over time, and that is OK. Talking with people who understand what you are going through can help you feel less alone and more in control. Support can also help with everyday tasks.

Ask your healthcare team about support for your emotional, social, or practical needs. They may be able to connect you with a support group for people with your type of cancer.

At the end of this resource, you will find a list of trusted organizations that can help. Cancer Support Community and many other organizations have helplines, support groups, online discussion boards, and more ways to seek support from others who have cancer.

CSC and Gilda's Club centers provide services free of charge to people impacted by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. Call 888-793-9355 or visit www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Find-Location-Near-You.

RESOURCES

ANTIBODY-DRUG CONJUGATES RESOURCES

Cancer Support Community

888-793-9355 | www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Antibody-Drug-Conjugates

Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance

212-268-1002 | www.OCRAHope.org

SHARE Cancer Support

844-275-7427 | www.ShareCancerSupport.org

American Cancer Society

800-227-2345 | www.Cancer.org

Association of Cancer Care Centers

301-984-9496 | www.ACCC-Cancer.org/Home/Learn/Precision-Medicine/Treatment/ADCs



CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Cancer Support Helpline® — Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (888-793-9355), available in 200 languages Mon-Thurs 11am-8pm ET and Fri 11am-6pm ET.

Open to Options® — Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling 888-793-9355 or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

Frankly Speaking about Cancer® — Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs.

Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs — With the help of over 200 locations, in 50 markets, CSC and Gilda's Club partners provide services free of charge to people impacted by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more:

www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Find-Location-Near-You

Cancer Experience Registry® — Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at **www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org**.

MyLifeLine® — CSC's secure, online community welcomes anyone impacted by cancer to easily connect with community to reduce stress, anxiety, and isolation. Create a personal network site and invite friends & family to follow your journey. And participate in our discussion forums any time of day to meet others like you who understand what you are experiencing. Join now at **www.MyLifeLine.org**.

Grassroots Network — Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at **www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Become-Advocate**.

This publication is available to download and print yourself at **www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/Antibody-Drug-Conjugates**

For print copies of this publication or other information about coping with cancer, visit **Orders.CancerSupportCommunity.org**

Frankly Speaking About Cancer: Antibody-Drug Conjugates Program Partner:



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The Cancer Support Community and its partners provide this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.

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