



Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy treatment takes into consideration the specific cancer present, drug bioavailability, effectiveness and the clinical condition of your animal companion. Treatment may consist of one specific drug or a combination of different drugs that may vary over the course of treatment depending on the individual's response. The drugs chosen aim to arrest further growth and metastasis (spread) of the cancer. As with human medicine, almost all chemotherapy drugs have potential side effects that range from mild to severe. Please inform us if your animal companion exhibits any of the symptoms listed below so that we may manage these potential side effects. Most frequently experienced side effects associated with most drugs are as follows:

Decreased appetite, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea

An animal that is nauseated will not necessarily vomit. They may be restless, anxious and/or salivate more than usual. This may occur for up to several days after treatment with some medications. Do not force your animal companion to eat their regular meals, as this may induce them to vomit. Ensure that fresh water or crushed ice is always available. Medications can be used to control the nausea and/or vomiting, in conjunction with a bland diet. Occasionally, prolonged nausea may get your animal companion out of the "habit" of eating. A high quality food in small amounts (after 24 hours of no vomiting) may break this cycle. Some suggestions are cottage cheese, rice, boiled eggs, lean meats or baby food may help pique their interest in food. These loose stools may occur if the digestive system is upset. Medications can be used to control the diarrhea, in conjunction with a bland diet.

Please notify your veterinarian regarding any changes in color and/or presence of blood, as this may be an indication for pursuing a different chemotherapy drug or additional medications.

Low Blood Counts

Due to your animal companion's type of cancer or due to the chemotherapy, bone marrow suppression may occur. Bone marrow produces the following kinds of cells and they may be reduced temporarily. Your veterinarian will be monitoring this condition throughout the course of treatment and will keep you informed of any changes.

- a. White Blood Cells (WBC): These cells fight infection. With reduced numbers, they may be more susceptible to infections.
- b. Red Blood Cells (RBC): These cells carry oxygen throughout the body. With reduced numbers, they may have pale mucous membranes and feel weaker.
- c. Platelets: These cells aid in blood clotting. With reduced numbers, they may bruise more easily or have prolonged bleeding from even minor wounds.

POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS (PSE).

*IV=Intravenous,
PO=Orally & SQ=Subcutaneous

Adriamycin: Given slowly as in IV infusion. PSE: nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, low blood counts, hair loss (occurs mostly in poodles and schnauzers), allergic reaction is rare. This drug has been identified to potentially cause damage to the heart muscles, certain breeds are more predisposed (dobermans, boxers and great danes) and it may occur with high cumulative doses.

Carboplatin: Given IV. PSE: nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, low blood counts.

CeeNu: Given PO. PSE: lack of appetite, diarrhea, low blood counts, fever.

Cytosar-U: Given IV or SQ. PSE: nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, low blood counts, allergic reaction is rare.

Cytoxan: Given PO. PSE: nausea and vomiting, lack of appetite, low blood counts and loss of hair (poodles and sheepdogs mostly). May irritate bladder, please encourage water consumption and monitor urination.

Elspar: Given SQ. PSE: vomiting and diarrhea, allergic reaction is rare.

Leukeran: Given PO. PSE: nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, low blood counts.

Vinblastine: Given IV. PSE: constipation (occurs mostly in felines), vomiting, diarrhea, cramping is rare.

Vincristine: Given IV. PSE: nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, low blood counts.

NSAIDs; (Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) such as Piroxicam and Metacam have some activity in eliminating malignant cancer cells. In addition, they may be beneficial for arthritis. PSE: gastrointestinal upset, which may be alleviated with antacids, such as pepcid AC.

Steroids; such as Prednisone and Dexamethasone may aid in the damage to some cancer cells. PSE: increase in appetite and water consumption, and increased panting in some cases.