

# FOLFOX

## New Chemotherapy Information

\_\_\_\_\_, MD

The purpose of this document is to explain your new chemotherapy regimen, FOLFOX. Section 1 describes the treatment and details how your treatment days will look. Section 2 includes things you need to know before treatment begins. Section 3 describes possible side effects to discuss with your doctor. Section 4 describes how chemotherapy can affect other aspects of your health.

### **SECTION 1: What Is FOLFOX and What Will My Treatment Look Like?**

FOLFOX treatment includes:

- Oxaliplatin
- 5-fluorouracil
- Leucovorin

### **What Should I Expect the Day of Chemotherapy?**

The day you start, you will receive IV chemotherapy for several hours in the treatment room. You will go home with a pump that gives a slow infusion of chemotherapy for 46 hours through the port. After the 46 hours, you will return for pump disconnect. This is repeated every 2 weeks. No overnight stays are necessary.

- Labs will be done each time you are due for chemotherapy.
- You will also see the doctor before getting chemotherapy to make sure you are doing well enough for the treatment.
- Treatment will be done AFTER completing labs and seeing the doctor.
- You may have a light meal prior to coming for treatments, this will NOT impact your lab results.
- Snacks are available in the treatment room. You may also bring your own food.



## **SECTION 2: Before Starting Treatment, Remember To Do These Two Things**

### **(1) Talk To Your Oncologist About Vitamins, Supplements, And Medications:**

- Keep a list of all prescription or over-the-counter products you take, including vitamins, dietary supplements, herbal medicines, and homeopathic remedies. Share this list with your health care provider at every visit.
- Please do not take any vitamins or supplements while on chemotherapy as this may interact with the medications. Do NOT take Folic acid or B complex.
- Always tell your provider before you start any new prescription or over-the-counter product.
- Tell your provider if you have heart disease. In rare cases, one of the chemotherapy agents, 5-FU can cause heart problems. Tell your provider right away if you have chest pain or pressure, flushing, shortness of breath, a cough, swelling of the hands or feet, or an irregular heartbeat.
- Tell your provider if you have dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) deficiency because you may have a higher risk of side effects from 5-FU.

### **(2) You May Need to Change Your Diet With Chemotherapy**

- Maintain a heart healthy well-balanced diet with low to minimal animal fats.
- Avoid juicing while on this chemo as it may increase the toxicity.
- You may become lactose intolerant while on this treatment. If you develop diarrhea, gas, indigestion, or abdominal cramping, avoid dairy products.

## **SECTION 3: What Are The Potential Side Effects?**

It is important to share all possible side effects, so you know what to expect. Some of the side effects that may occur include fatigue, nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, diarrhea, hair loss, low blood counts, skin problem called hand-foot syndrome, mouth sores.

Call your oncologist office if you experience any side effects. The team can offer many recommendations to help combat the side effects. See some recommendations below.

### **Nausea/Vomiting:**

- Anti-nausea medication is given in the treatment room prior to the chemotherapy
- Prescription for Zofran (Ondansetron) will be sent to your pharmacy. You may start this medication if you develop nausea or vomiting at home. Take 1 tablet every 8-12 hours as needed for nausea/vomiting. Zofran may cause headache and constipation.
- Lemon and/or ginger may also help with nausea.
- If you have excessive nausea, you may be given additional medications to take at home such as Decadron or Compazine.



**Diarrhea:**

- You may take Imodium (over the counter) if you develop diarrhea. Start with 2 tablets, then take one additional tablet with each bowel movement thereafter until it stops. Do not take more than 8 tablets in 24 hours.
  - If the diarrhea does not stop with Imodium, we need to know. You may need a prescription for Lomotil.
- Avoid highly seasoned or high fiber foods. Try foods such as white bread, white rice, bananas, matzo bread.
- Increase fluids. It is important to stay hydrated.

**Constipation:**

- Constipation can be a problem during treatment. It can also be caused by narcotics which are used for pain control. Treating constipation is extremely important since your immune system may be low and you may be at increased risk of infection
- Stool softeners such as Colace/ docusate sodium can be bought over the counter at your pharmacy. You may take 2-3 tablets at night.
- Treating constipation is an additive process. If this does not work, do not stop it. Instead add something on top.
- You may use Milk of Magnesia (30cc – 6 teaspoons) every 3-4 hours until you have a bowel movement. Once a bowel movement has occurred just continue with daily stool softener. Your goal is to go to the bathroom every day to every other day.
- Other medications you may try include: Senna 8.6mg – may take 2-4 tablets daily, or Miralax – take 1 tablespoon dissolved in 8 ounces of water once daily

**Low Blood Counts:**

- This treatment can increase your risk of anemia, bleeding, and infection.
- Make sure you have a thermometer at home.
- Call the office immediately if you develop a fever (temperature of 100.4°F or more) or shaking chills, even if it is the evening or weekend.
- If you develop low counts, adjustments may need to be made to your chemotherapy.
- Neulasta could be added to your treatment. It is an injection given 24 hours after chemotherapy. Neulasta may cause bone pain, particularly in your low back and pelvis. You may take Tylenol or Advil for this. Claritin has also been found to help with this bone pain. You may take it daily, starting the night before injection.

**SECTION 4: How Will Chemotherapy Affect Other Aspects of My Health?****Fertility**

- You should not get pregnant while on chemotherapy as this treatment could harm an unborn baby.



### **Vaccines**

- You may get the FLU vaccine while receiving chemotherapy.
- This should be done with your primary care physician.

### **Dental Procedures**

- Dental procedures should be avoided while on chemotherapy.
- If you absolutely need a dental procedure or deep cleaning while on chemotherapy, please discuss it with us first.

**If you are not feeling well or have any questions or concerns, please call the office. Uchart messaging is for non-emergent questions. There is an on-call service in the evening and weekends for urgent matters that cannot wait until the next business day.**

### **Contact Information:**

- Main Office Number (for general questions and scheduling): \_\_\_\_\_
- Nurse Triage Line (for clinical questions or concerns): \_\_\_\_\_
- After hours On Call: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Leave message with on- call service who will page the on-call physician.

### **Cancer Support Services**

To help you on your journey, the Cancer Support Department addresses the psychosocial, spiritual, nutritional, and physician aspects of wellness to enhance the medical care you receive. The following services are available to you at selected locations:

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| • Oncology Social Work                 | • Caregiver Support   |
| • Nutrition Counseling                 | • Exercise Physiology |
| • Psychosocial Oncology                | • Pastoral Care       |
| • Acupuncture                          | • Massage Therapy     |
| • Palliative Care                      | • Music Therapy       |
| • Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation | • Pet Therapy         |

If you are interested in these services or for more information, please contact:

### **Cancer Support Services**

305.243.4129

