



What is chemo?

Chemo is an umbrella term for cancer-treatment medications designed to travel through the body to zap cancer cells wherever they are. The drugs are powerful agents against cancer; they stop the growth of cancer cells. But, chemo medications also affect normal cells—especially fast-growing ones like hair. The normal cells, though—unlike most cancer cells—generally bounce back after treatment is completed.

Common Chemotherapy Drugs

The number of new cancer drugs has skyrocketed in recent years. Below is a chart of some of the most commonly used chemotherapy drugs.

Note: Since there is a lot of overlap as regards to which drugs are used to treat various types of cancer, this is just a very general listing of drugs that may be used for the cancers indicated.

Alkylating agents

Cancers they treat: breast, lung, and ovary; multiple myeloma; leukemia; lymphoma; sarcoma

Antimetabolites

Cancers they treat: breast, ovary, and intestinal tract; leukemia

Anthracyclines

Cancers they treat: breast, leukemia

Anti-tumor antibiotics

Cancers they treat: testicular, Hodgkin's lymphoma

Platinum drugs

Cancers they treat: lung, colon, testicular

Taxanes

Cancers they treat: breast, lung, head and neck, ovary, bladder, esophagus, GI tract, prostate

Topoisomerase inhibitors

Cancers they treat: lung, ovary, GI tract; some types of leukemia

Vinca alkaloids

Cancers they treat: leukemia