When Chemo Calls

January 1, 2001 By Lark Lands, PhD

For anyone undergoing radiation or chemotherapy (see "Cancer Rising"), Kedar Prasad, PhD, an expert on vitamins and cancer, recommends a low-fat, high-fiber diet with plenty of protein, calories, fruits and vegetables, along with daily intake of a potent multiple vitamin/mineral (without iron, copper or manganese), vitamin C (8 grams calcium ascorbate), vitamin E (800 IU d-alpha tocopherol succinate) and beta-carotene (60 mg). Doses should be divided in half and taken with morning and evening meals. Once your chemo regimen is done, Prasad recommends sticking with a healthy diet, along with the same nutrients but in half these total daily doses.

Other tips that boost the chances for successful therapy:

- Drink two to three quarts of water daily to help protect your kidneys.
- Bone up on drugs that counter side effects -- such as erythropoietin (Epogen) for low red blood counts and G-CSF (Neupogen) for low white blood counts -- and never accept nausea; many drugs, marijuana and home remedies can treat it (see “Pills! Chills! Thrills! Spills!” POZ, September 2000). And put your self-assertiveness training into practice by asking for anything you need.

Never forget that doctors and nurses aren’t infallible, and chemo no-no’s can be deadly. Ask in advance for a detailed description of your chemo -- which drugs in what dosages, given over what period of time. Then monitor the process. And yell like hell if something’s not right.

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