When Chemo Calls

How to make the best of it

June 1, 1998 By Lark Lands, PhD

- Doctors and nurses aren't infallible; therapy mistakes can be deadly. Ask in advance for a detailed description -- what drugs in what dosages given over what period of time. Then monitor the process, and yell if something's not right.
- 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 POZ, March 1997, p. 103). And prepare yourself to prod for anything you need.
- Consider using nutrients for body support after chemo treatments: B-12 and folic acid for the bone marrow and antioxidants (selenium, vitamins E and C, alpha-lipoic acid, carotenoid complex and N-acetyl-cysteine) to support the liver and counter oxidative stress.

Editor's note: Scott O'Hara died of chemo-related kidney failure while revising this article. See Tribute.

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