

# **"You've opted for Chemotherapy, now what?"**

## **How to prepare yourself for treatment!**

Depending on the severity and type of cancer, you may have some time before starting treatment. If this is you, or someone you know, I would recommend the following 12 things to prepare. Preparation is the best way to get through this horrible ordeal.

The biggest problem with having chemotherapy treatment is that most doctors say you **MUST** have chemotherapy. Nine out of ten do not give you an option.

April 5, 2001 the phone rang and my surgeon's voice was on the other end. "Robin," she said, "your test results are back. I'm sorry. It's cancer." She then continued to tell me she would see me in the office that next week to have my stitches removed. Just like that, then she hung up. In total shock and disbelief, I hung up the phone then sat down and cried. She said we can talk about drug therapy when I came in and I remember thinking to myself – at least she wasn't talking chemo.

Yah right!

In the office the surgeon gave me my full diagnosis to the best of her ability. It was Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma (NHL). We discussed "drug therapy" and I told her then I wasn't doing Chemo or any of those drugs. Her response was I needed to keep an open mind. It was I told her and no drugs were going into it. With that I left.

Next I saw my primary care physician and he sent me to a hematologist. Before I left we discussed my options and said it was my decision. We also discussed the surgeon's letter to him with my "refusal" of drug therapy.

The hematologist was very nice and spent the whole time during my appointment explaining exactly what NHL was, how it was typed and the various stages. What my options were and how she likes to treat patients. She uses Chemo and Radiation.

Well, I didn't care for her treatments either. My cancer was found in the right groin and she wanted to do radiation on both the right and left of the groin. When I asked why – her response was – just in case it decides to move to the left.

After her visit I went home and did major research. I Googled NHL, chemo treatments, remedies, herbs, etc. Then I went to the video store and rented movies about cancer patients. I watched shows on lifetime channel about cancer as well. When I was all done crying it was time to take action.

I called my primary care and told him I wanted another opinion or I was off to Europe where they use herbs to treat cancer. He sent me to Boston.

My doctor in Boston told me I could wait but someday I would have to have Chemo. I immediately liked this guy – since we both agreed there was no rush.

In 2004 my cancer spread from type 1 to type 3 meaning it went from just 1 part of my body to being in 3 parts. I was under mega stress during that time in my life and two nodes at the back of my head stuck out like points of a pencil. This made me nervous – January 2005 I finally gave in.

### **Twelve things to do before giving into chemo treatments**

Here are the 12 things I did before giving into chemo treatments that I highly recommend to anyone who has to go through this horrible ordeal –

- Talk with your doctor (s) with regard to your diagnosis and treatment. Ask about different drugs they want to give you and get documentation about each one
- Read everything you can about your disease and drugs – especially side effects – but don't drive yourself crazy over it
- Join a support group – call 800 number and find nearest support group to you
- Spend time mourning the loss of your normal self and cry till it's out of your system – you'll need your strength to get through chemo
- Go to the library and get books on humor (study them)
- Become a student of humor, watch various comedy movies as well as Patch Adams with Robin Williams
- Listen to self-healing tapes – read the books
- Cut your hair short – in case you lose it, visit a wig shop if you want or make hats to wear
- Keep a journal about your chemotherapy treatments, how you feel, what you notice around you or write poetry about it
- Get a support system in place for people to help you – whether it's to take you back and forth for treatments, run to the store or refill prescriptions, visit you in person or on the phone
- Ask family and/or friends to put you into their prayers (they do work wonders)

- Don't shut your friends and family out – talk about having to go through chemo and having the cancer – you may find that you will lose some people who you thought were close to you, but that's okay – it's their problem not yours that they can't deal with what you are going through – you need to concentrate on you and getting better!

To go through chemo itself is tough. In fact, it is downright nasty. However, if you have the right frame of mind – it does make it easier.

As for the side effects of Chemotherapy, that's for another story.