

Throughout your diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation, you may hear medical terms that are unfamiliar to you. We are including this Glossary of Terms to help you and your family members better understand discussions with your physicians or medical reports you receive. However, nothing takes the place of direct communication with your medical team. Whenever you have a question, please ask.

Absolute neutrophil count (ANC): The number of special white blood cells that fight infection.

Acute: Having severe symptoms with sudden onset.

Adjuvant: Additional treatment after the primary therapy to reduce the risk that the cancer will return. Adjuvant therapy may include chemotherapy, radiation, hormones, immune enhancement, targeted therapy and more.

Afebrile: Having a normal temperature.

Alopecia: The loss of hair, a common side effect of chemotherapy and total body radiation.

Anaphylaxis: An acute allergic reaction causing shortness of breath, rash, wheezing and possibly low blood pressure.

Anemia: A low number of red blood cells in the bloodstream, resulting in insufficient oxygen to the tissues and organs. Patients may feel weak, tired or short of breath, and appear pale.

Antibiotics: A medicine that kills bacteria in the body, used to prevent or treat infection.

Antiemetic: A medication used to prevent or control nausea and vomiting.

Ascites: Accumulation of fluid in the abdomen.

Bacteria: A type of germ that can cause infection.

Biologics: These agents or drugs are substances made from a living organism or its products, such as antibodies, interleukins and vaccines. Biologic agents may be used in the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of cancer.

Biopsy: A procedure in which a small piece of tissue or skin is removed and examined under a microscope to diagnose cancer, unusual infections or other complications.

Bronchoscopy: A procedure that examines the lungs with a telescope-like tube.

Central venous catheter (CVC): An IV tube placed into a large vein that leads to the heart. The catheter is usually put in before the treatment starts and is used to give medicines, fluids or transfusions and for taking blood samples.

Chemistry profile: A blood sample that analyzes the chemicals in the blood, including liver and kidney function tests.

Chemotherapy: Medicines used to treat cancer.

Chronic: A persistent problem lasting a long time.

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Clinical trial: A research study to determine the effectiveness of a drug or treatment.

Colonoscopy: A procedure that examines the lower GI tract with a small telescope-like tube that is inserted through the rectum.

Colony stimulating factor: Proteins that stimulate the production of certain types of blood cells. Examples are Neupogen (G-CSF) or Neulasta (GM-CSF), which stimulate the white blood cells to grow and prevent infection.

Complete blood count (CBC): Blood test to measure the number of red cells, white cells and platelets in the blood.

CT scan: A three-dimensional X-ray, also called a CAT scan.

Cultures: Samples of blood, urine and stool, and swabs of the throat, nose and sores that are sent to the laboratory to be checked for infection.

Edema: Abnormal accumulation of fluid. Swelling may occur in the legs, arms, lungs and abdomen.

EKG: A painless test to evaluate a patient's heart rhythm.

Electrolyte: A mineral found in the bloodstream that must be maintained within a certain level to prevent organ malfunction. Electrolytes include:

- **Potassium:** Helps the heart maintain a healthy pattern of beating. Too little or too much potassium may cause heart rate or rhythm problems.
- **Magnesium:** Helps the muscles of the body function properly. Too little magnesium may cause seizures, muscle cramping and weakness.

- **Calcium:** Helps maintain bone strength, metabolism, nerve and muscle function, and blood coagulation. Too much calcium may cause confusion and tiredness. Too little calcium may cause muscle cramping and seizures.

Emesis: Vomiting.

Fever: A higher body temperature than normal temperature. May also be referred to as febrile. Your doctor needs to be notified of fever over 100.4°F.

Fungus: A mold or yeast that can cause an infection in the body, especially in the immunocompromised patient. Antifungal medications are used to prevent and treat these infections.

GI tract (gastrointestinal): A system of the body that refers to the esophagus, stomach and intestines.

Granulocyte: A sub-class of white blood cells that protects the body against bacterial infections.

Hemoglobin: The part of each red blood cell that carries oxygen to the rest of the body.

Hepatosplenomegaly: An enlargement of the liver (hepato) and spleen.

Herpes simplex virus (HSV): An infection that produces small, painful, fluid-filled blisters on the skin and mucous membranes. This infection is common in the immunocompromised patient.

Immune system: The body's system of defense against infection or disease.

Immunosuppression: A decreased immune defense against infection caused by the effects of chemotherapy. Patients are said to be immunocompromised. *(continued)*

Intravenous (IV): Into a vein. Many medications and chemotherapy are administered intravenously.

Irradiation or radiation therapy: The use of radiation energy to interfere with cancer cell growth.

Jaundice: Yellowing of the eyes/skin. It is a sign that the liver is not functioning properly.

Leukocyte: A white blood cell.

Lymphocyte: One type of white blood cell that helps protect the body from invading organisms that cause infection.

Metastatic: Spread of disease from the organ or tissue of origin to another part of the body.

Mucositis: Inflammation and ulceration of mucous membranes lining the digestive tract.

Neoadjuvant: This treatment is given as a first step to shrink a tumor prior to the main treatment, such as surgery. Examples of neoadjuvant therapy include chemotherapy, radiation and hormone therapy.

NPO: Nothing to eat or drink.

Palliative: This type of care is given to improve the quality of life of patients who have a serious, chronic or life-threatening disease. The goals may include treating disease symptoms, treatment side effects and pain management, as well as the psychological, social and spiritual aspects of illness.

Pancytopenia: A deficiency of all blood cells (red blood cells, white blood cells, platelets).

Platelets: Blood cells made in the bone marrow that clot the blood and stop the bleeding.

Protocol: The total plan of care for the patient, including the schedule of treatments and tests.

Radiation therapy: A treatment using high-energy radiation to help eliminate cancerous cells from the body. It also suppresses the immune system so it will not reject new stem cells from another individual.

Recurrence (or relapse): When cancer comes back.

Red blood cells (RBCs): Blood cells made in the bone marrow that carry oxygen from the lungs throughout the body.

Regimen: A plan of treatment.

Remission: When no signs of disease (cancer) are present.

Steroid: A drug used to prevent and control inflammation, allergic reactions and graft-versus-host disease.

Stomatitis: Mouth sores.

Subcutaneous: The layer of tissue beneath the skin. This is how growth factor injections are given.

Tissue: A group of similar cells (such as skin, liver and bone marrow) that perform a specific job.

Tumor: Uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells in a tissue or organ.

Ultrasound: A technique for taking pictures of the internal organs or other structures using sound waves.

White blood cells (WBCs): Blood cells made in the bone marrow that fight infection.