



## **TRANSCRIPT:**

### **Preparing for chemotherapy Part 1: What to expect when having chemotherapy**

In this video we're going to talk about:

- Chemotherapy as a treatment option for womb cancer
- And we'll hear perspectives from people who've been through chemotherapy for womb cancer, and their recommendations for how to get through it.

Some people with womb cancer will be offered chemotherapy as part of their treatment plan. This is most commonly given after surgery to try to reduce the chance of the cancer coming back. Chemotherapy may be given in combination with another treatment such as radiotherapy.

Whether you need chemotherapy or not depends on how far your cancer has spread, what it looks like under the microscope, and the results of some tests done on your cancer that work out which molecular group it belongs to. Chemotherapy can also be given as the first treatment for womb cancer if surgery is not possible or if the cancer has come back, also known as recurrence.

#### **[What is chemotherapy?]**

Chemotherapy is a drug treatment, usually given by a drip over a few hours. It's usually given in a day unit. There can be a lot of waiting around for tests to be done, and for drugs to be made up, before you can start the drip.

Every time a dose of chemotherapy is given it's called a cycle and there's usually a rest of between 1 and 3 weeks after each cycle. The most common drugs used for womb cancer are called carboplatin and paclitaxel.

No treatment is given on your first appointment with the chemotherapy team. This is all about them getting to know you and explaining and planning your treatment. It's a good idea to bring someone with you to help you remember and understand the information that will be discussed.

You will usually have a blood test a few days before each chemotherapy session to make sure everything's okay. Sometimes this raises concerns, which means you'll need another blood test, and your chemotherapy will need to be re-scheduled. This is important, to make sure you're as well as possible before each cycle.

We asked people who've been through chemotherapy for womb cancer to tell us about their experience, and what advice they would give to someone having chemotherapy

### **[What's it like having chemotherapy?]**

First, my bloods had to be checked to make sure that my white blood cell count was high enough to have the chemo, and then there was the waiting for the chemo drugs to be made up.

Sometimes it was difficult for the nurses to cannulate my veins ready for the treatment. So, I made sure that I drank plenty of water that morning, so my veins were nice and full, and they put a warm wheat bag onto my arms to help the veins dilate nicely, so it's easier for the nurses to find the appropriate vein.

To keep me going during the day, I had what I called my 'chemo bag', which I would take with me each time, with my tablet — downloaded with things to read or listen to, a magazine or book, some hot soup in a flask, a bottle of water, a book, hair conditioner and comb (to help with getting through the cold cap on), and a shawl to wrap round me (using the cold cap makes you feel very cold).

Take some drinks and snacks that you enjoy — things that would be easy to eat, especially because you will be hooked up to the chemotherapy. I just tried to make myself comfortable by taking some home comforts with me. I took off my boots when I got there and put on some warm fluffy socks.

I had somebody that I could call if I felt I needed to. They knew I might not actually call them; however, it was just nice to have somebody on standby, just to have a chat, in case you felt a little bit lonely or overwhelmed.

### **[What advice would you give to someone preparing to start chemotherapy?]**

Use the appointments you have with the chemo team to ask any questions you have about the treatment, side effects, etc. If you want to speak to the consultant, ask to speak to them — that's something you're entitled to do.

It's really good you have a list of people you can contact written down, maybe in a notebook. And then, if you're feeling unwell, or you just weren't sure about something, then everything is to hand.

Use the contact and emergency numbers you're given by your chemo team if you need to — that's what they're there for, and it's better to check something with them than find out you don't need to be concerned about it than for you to end up really unwell because something's not right.

Don't be afraid of asking questions and asking about each step that happens. Understanding each step will make you feel more relaxed.

Don't sit in silence — please, always ask.

### **[What helped get you through chemotherapy?]**

[www.peachestrust.org](http://www.peachestrust.org) Email: [admin@peachestrust.org](mailto:admin@peachestrust.org)  
Registered Charity (England and Wales) no. 1190440

It was a really rubbish time, but what kept me going was the kindness of my friends who were so thoughtful in doing what they could to support me. Going through something like this is when you find out who your friends really are, and also the kindness of strangers, and realising that this was the one time in my life I needed to be selfish, in thinking of myself, and learning to be kind to myself, give myself little treats, like enjoying a nice shower gel, or whatever — taking pleasure from the small stuff, enjoying my garden, letting the world focus on the big stuff while I just focused on me, and getting myself through the treatment.

I decided that I would like to try and walk, just around the block, if I could, during my chemotherapy. It's really good for keeping your body active, and also for your mind. Nothing too strenuous, only what you can manage. I would go with my husband, my family, and just have a nice stroll around the block.

### **[Where can I find further information and support?]**

Further information about chemotherapy can be found on the Peaches website, alongside a checklist of things to bring with you when you have the treatment, put together by our Peaches community.