St. Agnes Cancer Institute
New Patient Orientation

Immunotherapy: Information for Patients and Families
No One Fights Alone!
Your team may include...

- Oncologist
- Radiation Oncologist
- Primary Nurse
- Infusion Room Nurse
- Nurse Practitioner
- Social Worker
- Nurse Navigator
- Dietitian
- Rehab Services (PT/OT/SLP)
The Immuno-Oncology (I/O) Clinic is located in the Baltimore Medical Systems (BMS) building near the white awning. Enter the building and take the elevator on the right up to the 4th floor, marked “Specialty Clinic”.

We make every effort to see you on time. We recognize there are circumstances that both the clinic and you cannot control.

• Arriving more than 15 min early for your appointment does not guarantee you will be seen early.

• If you arrive late, you will have to wait to be seen until your provider/nurse is available, or you can reschedule.

• If you arrived on time, are checked in, and have been waiting more than 15 minutes, please speak with someone at our front desk.
Ways to treat cancer include...

• Chemotherapy
• Targeted Therapy
• Immunotherapy
• Hormonal Therapy
• Radiation
• Surgery
• Bone Marrow Transplant
Systemic Treatment

What is Systemic Treatment?
Medication that travels in the bloodstream throughout the body.

Goals could be to...

• Cure the cancer
• Control the cancer, keep it from growing or spreading
• Manage symptoms so you feel better

Types:
• Chemotherapy
• Targeted Therapy
• Immunotherapy
• Hormonal Therapy

Ascension
Systemic Treatment

Is the treatment painful?

**NO!**

- If you feel anything uncomfortable or see redness or swelling at the IV site, tell your nurse immediately. This could be an allergic reaction.

- Some medications can irritate the vein but this can be managed easily if you let your nurse know.

- If you feel pain, or notice redness or swelling after you are at home, call the Cancer Institute immediately.
Intravenous infusion through an IV in your arm or through a Port-A-Cath
Immunotherapy

The Garden Analogy

1. Imagine your body as a garden, where the soil is your immune system. When you’re healthy, the soil is rich and well tended, and the garden is green. Normally, the soil is able to prevent weeds from growing out of control.

2. Cancer cells are like weeds in your garden. Sometimes the soil can allow weeds to grow and spread, and soon, the entire garden suffers as your plants compete for space and nutrients.

3. I-O is like adding weed-control fertilizer to the soil. It enriches the garden’s existing soil, but too much fertilizer in the soil may harm your garden.

4. Now the soil can help keep the weeds under control and can maintain the garden’s health.
Let’s Talk About Immunotherapy

How does it work?

Immunotherapy activates your own immune system to fight cancer cells

Goals of Immunotherapy

Could be to:

• Cure the cancer
• Control the cancer, keep it from growing or spreading
• Manage symptoms so you feel better
The immune system becomes overactive and starts to damage healthy cells.

- The side effects are similar to an allergic reaction, such as a rash or diarrhea.
- If your healthcare team is made aware of the side effects sooner, they can help manage them faster.

We will focus on 3 of the more common areas that experience side effects: the stomach and intestines, skin, and lungs.
Stomach and Intestines

- Diarrhea
- Change in bowel pattern
- Stomach pain
- Nausea and vomiting (rare)
Immunotherapy

Skin

- Rash
- Itching
- Blisters, peeling, or skin sores
- Painful sores or ulcers in your mouth, nose, throat, or genital area
Shortness of breath
Cough (new or different)
Pain in chest
Fever

- May be the only sign of an infection
- Check your temperature once a day, around the same time each day
- If temperature is **100.5 or higher**, call your doctor immediately
- If it is **lower** than 100.5 but you are feeling **hot, cold, achy or have chills** call your doctor immediately
- **DO NOT** take any fever medications (Tylenol, Advil) until you speak with your doctor
Other Important Things to Know

Being Safe with Body Fluids at Home

Using the toilet:
- Flush the toilet twice with the lid down
- Wash hands well with soap and water
- Clean any waste on the toilet with antibacterial or bleach wipes

Soiled laundry:
- Wear disposable gloves when handling
- Wash separately from other clothes and linens
- Wash for 2 cycles in hot water before drying

Cleaning up body fluids:
- Wear disposable gloves
- Wash hands well with soap and water after removing gloves
Vaccinations

Check with your doctor before you get any vaccinations including the flu shot.
Benefits of Quitting or Reducing Tobacco

- A better chance of successful treatment
- Fewer serious side effects
- Faster recovery from treatment
- Decreased risk of cancer coming back, or getting another cancer diagnosis
- Lower risk of infection
- Easier breathing
- More energy
- Better quality of life
Other Important Things to Know

Things to Remember

- Take your home medications as regularly scheduled
- Bring any home medications you may need to take while at your appointment
- Bring your current medication list
- **Do not** wear perfume or cologne please
- One guest at a time in the infusion room, and no children under 18 are allowed
- Carry your Emergency Room card and/or Immunotherapy Wallet Card with you at all times
- Bring your completed Side Effects log/Patient Checklist to your follow-up appointments with your doctor
- Bring entertainment w/ headphones, books, puzzles, etc
One Last Thing...

Call your cancer center as soon as you notice that something is not normal or you feel different.
Questions?
Thank you for your contributions to this slideshow:
Bristol-Myers Squibb
Cross Cancer Institute
Gang-stock.adobe.com
Murtha Cancer Center