



Immune Therapy Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is immune therapy?

- Immune therapy is a type of treatment that uses your body's immune system to fight cancer.
- Your immune system is made up of cells, tissues and organs that work together to fight infections and cancers.
- Immune therapy treatments tell your body's immune system to attack and get rid of cancer cells.
- Once your immune system knows that the cancer is there, it starts to work hard to destroy your cancer cells.

How is chemotherapy different from immune therapy?

- Chemotherapy medications attack and get rid of cancer cells, but they also damage some healthy cells. This causes side effects like hair loss and vomiting.
- Immune therapy medications do not damage healthy cells the same way that chemotherapy medications do.
- This means that immune therapy medications usually cause fewer side effects than chemotherapy medications.

What are examples of immune therapy medications?

Some examples of immune therapy medications are:

- [Pembrolizumab \(Keytruda®\)](#)
- [Nivolumab \(Opdivo®\)](#)
- [Ipilimumab \(Yervoy®\)](#)

These medications are used to treat many types of cancer, including some types of lymphoma, lung, kidney, and skin cancers.



How is immune therapy treatment given?

All immune therapy medications are given by injection (needle) into a vein (IV).

Why is it important to tell my healthcare team about side effects?

If you have side effects, you must talk to your healthcare team right away. **You may need urgent treatment.**

- When your immune system works harder than normal, you may have side effects in your bowels, skin, lungs, liver, kidneys, hormones, and other organs.
- Side effects from immune therapy medications are usually mild but they can become serious or life-threatening in rare cases.
- Some things to watch for are:
 - Diarrhea
 - A new cough
 - Rash
 - Any other new symptom
- You may notice side effects during your treatment, or weeks to months after your treatment stops.

What happens if I have side effects?

- Side effects from immune therapy medications are often managed with medications called corticosteroids. They may be pills you take by mouth or given to you through an IV.
- You may also need other medications, depending on which side effects you have.
- You may need to stop your immune therapy treatment until your side effects get better.
- If the side effects are severe and cannot be managed, you may need to stop taking the immune therapy forever. This is rare.
- For more details about side effects, please see the medication information sheets for the specific cancer treatments you are taking.