



Infusion Reactions

This handout gives you information about a reaction that you may have from your intravenous (IV) cancer treatment. This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare team.

You will learn:

- What an infusion reaction is
- Why you need to know about infusion reactions
- How to help prevent infusion reactions
- Common symptoms of an infusion reaction
- What to do and expect if you have an infusion reaction



Who do I contact if I have questions or need help?

My cancer healthcare provider is: _____

What is an infusion reaction?



An infusion reaction is any side effect that you get while a medication is infusing into you (going into your vein) or shortly after the infusion stops. Infusion reactions may also be called allergic or hypersensitivity reactions.

Infusion reactions can be mild (such as a rash) or severe (such as a serious allergic reaction with difficulty breathing, fever, or other severe symptoms). If you have a serious reaction you will need treatment right away.

Why do I need to know about infusion reactions?

- One or more of the medications in your cancer treatment can cause infusion reactions.
- If you have had an infusion reaction to your cancer treatment before, you may be more likely to have one again.
- Most infusion reactions happen during the first treatment, but they can still happen after you have had many treatments.
- You need to watch for signs of a reaction so you can tell your healthcare team right away if you think you are having one.

What are some common symptoms of an infusion reaction?

You must tell your health care team **right away** if you have any of these symptoms while getting your IV medication:



- Itchiness
- Rash
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest or throat tightness
- Swollen lips, face, or tongue
- Fever, chills
- Dizziness
- Back Pain
- Headache
- Flushing
- Nausea (feeling like you need to throw up)
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Stomach pain

What happens if I have an infusion reaction?

- **Tell your healthcare team right away.**
- Your IV cancer treatment will be slowed down or stopped.
- You may need medications to treat your side effects.
- Your health care team will tell you if your cancer treatment needs to be changed.



What can I do to help prevent an infusion reaction?

- You may need to take medications orally (by mouth) or you may be given medications in your IV before you get your cancer treatment to prevent a reaction.
- There are different types of medications to stop infusion reactions before they start or treat the symptoms of an infusion reaction that has already started. The medications are called:
 - Antihistamines (such as diphenhydramine or Benadryl®)
 - H2 blockers (such as ranitidine or Zantac®)
 - Corticosteroids (such as dexamethasone)
 - Analgesics/antipyretics (such as acetaminophen or Tylenol®)
- You may still have an infusion reaction even after taking these medications.
- Some of these medications may make you feel drowsy or dizzy. Consider asking someone to drive you to and from the hospital on your treatment days.

