

Pregnancy and Cancer Treatment

During Treatment

Chemotherapy and radiation may harm a developing fetus. Treatment may cause miscarriage. It is possible to become pregnant during treatment even when you are not having periods unless you take steps to prevent pregnancy. It is very important to talk with your oncologist or nurse practitioner and let them know if you are sexually active. They will be able to prescribe safe birth control and answer questions about pregnancy during treatment. If you think you might be pregnant find a member of your healthcare team you feel comfortable with and let them know your concerns. Your conversations with your provider will be confidential.

Because of the dangers of pregnancy both to the fetus and to you, routine pregnancy tests will be done any time you are having chemotherapy, radiation or tests. All girls over the age of 10 will have this routine test on a regular basis during treatment.

Treatments that would harm a fetus include chemotherapy, radiation, x-rays, CT scans and other radiology testing.

After Treatment

Timeframe for pregnancy after treatment:

Most oncologists will recommend waiting 2 years after treatment to get pregnant. Most relapses occur during this time period so you want to make sure you are healthy and well enough to carry a pregnancy.

For women it is recommended to wait a minimum of 6 months because your eggs that are in the maturing process may be damaged.

For men it is recommended to wait 2 years or more as sperm may have been damaged by chemotherapy or radiation and the damage often repairs itself within that time period.

Early menopause

Some women resume monthly periods after treatment but will have an early menopause. The timeframe for pregnancy may be shorter.

Pregnancy Risks

If you had radiation to the whole abdomen and pelvis area there is a higher risk of miscarriage, preterm delivery or problems during labor. You should have an obstetrician who specializes in high-risk pregnancy. Some chemotherapy can cause damage to the heart and lungs. Your oncologist will let you know if you have these risk factors, which could cause complications during pregnancy.

Birth Defect Risks

The rate of birth defects after treatment is the same as in the general public.



Risk of your child having cancer

It does not appear your child will have a higher risk of cancer unless you had a genetic type of cancer. Your oncologist will let you know if you have a hereditary form of cancer.

Resources

www.fertilehope.org

www.curesearch.org

www.MyOncofertility.org