

Toolkit for the Ladies

International treatment guidelines or protocols typically refer to diseases in general and are not tailored personally to each person. As you are unique, ensure the medical team adapts the treatment protocol to you and your needs specifically.

Knowing what to expect beforehand allows you to be prepared and to make necessary arrangements.

Here we share some tips from other Belongers to help you through your journey.

- ❖ Write down beforehand all the questions to ask the medical team.
- ❖ Keep an appointment diary.
- ❖ Keep track of your symptoms, including mood symptoms, it will help you understand what works best. Treatments and new situations might temporarily affect your memory, so keeping track is important.
- ❖ Wear comfortable clothes to the treatments * (check what else you should pack in your bag)

Well – being

- ❖ Take each day as it comes.
- ❖ Remind yourself that you are not superwoman. Ask for help when you need it.
- ❖ Encourage your spouse/partner and children to get emotional support of their own. They may feel obligated to spend more time with you, which may make them feel more anxious.
- ❖ Connect with other people who are going through the same journey.
- ❖ Restrict visitors and visiting times and choose which visitors you would like to see, remember you need to rest.
- ❖ Always be kind to yourself.
- ❖ Delegate a spokesperson to help you communicate if you feel it is necessary.
- ❖ Do not suffer in silence. If you have side effects or bad symptoms such as pain, etc., contact your medical team.
- ❖ Keep your energy levels balanced by eating up healthy meals and drinking a lot of fluids.
- ❖ If you do not feel like eating an entire meal after chemotherapy, occasional naughty snacks are okay if limited and healthy food is also consumed.
- ❖ Exercise is an excellent tool to improve mental and physical wellbeing, even if it means sitting close to an open window. Try going for short walks if you can or try some in-bed yoga exercises.
- ❖ Try keeping a treatment calendar. Ticking off each completed treatment is very satisfying and helps keep you positive and focused.

Intimacy:

- ❖ Dating, relationships, sexual intimacy, and body image may be different for you after treatment. This is entirely normal.
- ❖ Take your recovery at your own pace.
- ❖ If you are single, in a relationship, or dating someone new, you should not be shy to discuss sex and intimacy with your partner and the healthcare team, reach for support if needed.
- ❖ Gynecological symptoms and side effects are common such as: stop of the menstrual period, occasional bleeding/spotting, tender breasts, menopausal symptoms, etc. Be aware of them and consult with your medical team
- ❖ If you plan on having children in the future, discuss fertility conservation options with the healthcare team before starting treatment.
- ❖ If you are experiencing symptoms of menopause, help to alleviate some of the symptoms is available. Speak with the healthcare team or someone you trust.
- ❖ Ask your healthcare team to discuss ways to help prevent osteoporosis.

Staying beautiful:

Always discuss beauty regimes with your medical team before the start of treatment.

- ❖ If you usually dye your hair, get it done before treatment begins (ask your doctor if you can dye your hair during treatment).
- ❖ Treatment may weaken your nails, ask your medical team if you can have a manicure before starting the treatment and if you should invest in nail strengthening polish.
- ❖ Find out if the treatment can cause you to lose your hair, (this includes your eyebrows). If so, color-match eyebrow pencils before, or ask if you may get your eyebrows tattooed.
- ❖ If out in the sun, remember to put sunscreen on your face, neck, and scalp.
- ❖ Your hair may grow back a bit fuzzy, regular trims can help the hair grow back quicker.

Our top tip:

- ❖ Many female Belongers affected by cancer recommend taking time to treat yourself to do the things you enjoy. It may be as simple as taking a long bath or curling up with some hot chocolate and your favorite book. The most important thing is to allow yourself regular times where you simply do whatever you enjoy and makes you feel good.

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