

# Pancreatic Cancer UK

## Transcript of 'Chemotherapy and pancreatic cancer' information video

### Title slide: Chemotherapy and pancreatic cancer.

**Jeni Jones, Specialist Nurse:** My name is Jeni, and I'm one of the nurses working for Pancreatic Cancer UK. I work on the [Support Line](#) and I take calls from patients and families who are affected by pancreatic cancer.

### Title slide: What is chemotherapy?

**Jeni Jones, Specialist Nurse:** [Chemotherapy](#) is one of the main treatments for pancreatic cancer. Chemotherapy uses drugs which kill the cancer cells. It can shrink the tumours but it can also help with the symptoms of the cancer.

There are many [different drugs](#) which can be used to treat pancreatic cancer. You may have one drug on its own, or you may have it in combination with another drug. Some common examples of chemotherapies used to treat pancreatic cancer are [FOLFIRINOX](#), [Gemcitabine](#). Sometimes this is given with another drug called Capecitabine and this is called GemCap. Or Gemcitabine can be given with a drug called [Abraxane](#)<sup>®</sup>.

### Title slide: Who can have chemotherapy?

**Jeni Jones, Specialist Nurse:** Chemotherapy can be used in different ways.

### Title slide: Chemotherapy if you can have surgery

**Jeni Jones, Specialist Nurse:** If you have had [surgery](#) to remove pancreatic cancer, and you're recovering well, then you may be offered [chemotherapy](#). This is given to help to stop the cancer from coming back.

## **Title slide: Chemotherapy if the cancer has grown into blood vessels near the pancreas**

**Jeni Jones, Specialist Nurse:** If you have pancreatic cancer, which has grown into some of the blood vessels close by, then you may or may not be able to have surgery. This will depend on which blood vessels are involved and how far the cancer has grown. You may be offered [chemotherapy](#) to try to shrink the cancer so that at a later date, surgery might become possible.

## **Title slide: Chemotherapy if you can't have surgery**

**Jeni Jones, Specialist Nurse:** If you have a pancreatic cancer that cannot be removed by surgery, then you may be offered [chemotherapy](#). This will help to slow down the growth of the cancer and it will also help with the symptoms of the cancer. However, it will not cure the cancer, but it will help you to feel better and improve the quality of your life.

**Carol, in recovery from pancreatic cancer:** I remember the first time I walked into the chemo unit just seeing all these machines and obviously people with different cancers, different degrees of illness. It was very overwhelming and quite daunting. But they done so much to put my mind at ease and relax me. It helped a lot.

## **Title slide: Side effects of chemotherapy for pancreatic cancer**

**Jeni Jones, Specialist Nurse:** Chemotherapy can cause [side effects](#). This will depend on the drugs that are being given and they may also affect different people in different ways.

Having chemotherapy can mean that you are more at risk of getting an [infection](#). Things to look out for are a high temperature. This would be a temperature of more than 37.5 degrees centigrade. You may also experience headaches, joint aches, muscle aches, shivering and shaking feelings, what is referred to as flu like symptoms. Having an infection while you're on chemotherapy can be serious. You should contact your doctor or nurse so that you can be treated straight away. You should have an emergency number given to you when you started chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy can cause other side effects. You may [feel sick or actually be sick](#). You may have [diarrhoea](#) or constipation. Some people [lose their hair](#). You may have a sore mouth or you may have [taste changes](#) which means that you may eat or drink less. You may suffer from fatigue which is feeling extremely tired and exhausted. Some people experience [peripheral neuropathy](#), which is tingling and numbness in their fingers and toes.

If you're worried about any of the side effects of chemotherapy, or you're worried that you might have an infection, call the emergency number which you've been given. If you don't have an emergency number, you can call the chemotherapy unit. You can also speak to your GP.

**Stuart, living with pancreatic cancer:** And the first time I had it, I was lying down and it was absolutely awful. Both whilst I was having it and the two or three days afterwards, I was sick on the way home in the car, I had to be confined to bed for about two or three days. Awful diarrhoea, dreadful vomiting. The good news for me, was that the second of the bouts of chemotherapy in the first lot was better than the first, the third was better than the second and so by the end of the first tranche of chemotherapy I was really knocked out for just about a day and then I was able to get on with things the day after.

**Carol, in recovery from pancreatic cancer:** It did affect my appetite and certain foods really started to taste metallic but you sort of get used to that. But the biggest thing for me was the [fatigue](#) and affecting my appetite.

**Jeni Jones, Specialist Nurse:** You can find out more [information about chemotherapy](#) including how it is given and the side effects of chemotherapy on the Pancreatic Cancer UK website, [pancreaticcancer.org.uk](http://pancreaticcancer.org.uk).

If you have any more concerns about chemotherapy and pancreatic cancer you can speak to the specialist nurses on our [Support Line](#). You can call us on **0808 801 0707** or you can email us at [nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk](mailto:nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk)