

Side Effects of Chemo to watch for:

Anemia

What is anemia? Anemia is an inadequate amount of red blood cells

Bone Marrow suppression

Bone Marrow suppression can cause anemia or a low white blood cell count. A low white blood cell count will lower the cats' resistance to infections.

Cardio toxicity

Poisoning of the heart

Lethargy

Loss Of Appetite

Vomiting

Diahorea

Constipation

Hair Loss/Whisker loss

Infections

Nervousness

Increased thirst/urination

Common chemo medications and their side effects:

Prednisone/Prednisolone

Prednisone is not a chemo medication but is commonly included with chemo protocols so it has been included in this paper. Prednisone can cause salt retention which can make your cat drink more water. Weight gain can be a welcome side effect of Prednisone. Prednisone is a steroid so cats that are diabetic either should not be on it or should be tested regularly. Also, non-diabetic cats should be tested periodically to make sure the prednisone hasn't brought on diabetes.

L-Asparaginase(Elspar)

Injectable only. Can cause allergic reactions, problems with blood clotting, raise blood sugar levels, liver disease, and vomiting. A shot of benadryl 15 minutes before Elspar can greatly decrease the chance for an allergic reaction. This medication typically does not cause bone marrow suppression.

Chlorambucil(Leukeran)

Works by binding or breaking DNA strands to stop rapidly dividing cells from replicating. Chlorambucil is slow acting so side effects are usually less especially in cats. Bone marrow suppression(usually occurs within the first two weeks), anemia, and nausea.

Cyclophosphamide(Cytoxan)

Used to target and kill rapidly dividing cells, such as cancer cells. Bone marrow suppression, hair loss(not commonly seen in cats), and nausea.

Oncovin(Vincristine)

Should be given by IV only due to soft tissue around the site dying. Can cause neurological side effects such as difficulty coordinating feet and constipation.

Methotrexate

Bone marrow suppression, nausea, liver disease. Can inhibit the body's ability to absorb Folic acid. Folic acid supplements are sometimes given along with methotrexate to reduce side effects and stop any folic acid deficiency.

Doxorubicin

Given by IV drip only as it will kill any skin it comes in contact with. Can be toxic to normal cells, nausea, hair/whisker loss, loss of kidney function in cats, cardio toxicity. Because of the risk for cardio toxicity the use of doxorubicin is limited to a certain max amount-240 mg/M² (M² = square meters of body surface area).

Lomustine(CCNU)

Works by binding DNA so that the DNA can't replicate. Crosses the blood/brain barrier. Can be given by pill or IV injectable. Side effects: bone marrow suppression and liver disease. Usually antibiotics are given with this drug to help combat infections if the white blood cell count gets low. Liver function tests should be done routinely. CCNU typically does not cause stomach upset.