

FIGURE 6.**PATIENT EDUCATION TIP SHEET: MANAGEMENT OF GASTROINTESTINAL SIDE EFFECTS IN MULTIPLE MYELOMA****KEY POINTS**

Many of the drugs used to treat multiple myeloma may be associated with gastrointestinal side effects, including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and constipation. Managing side effects can reduce your discomfort and can allow you to receive the best treatment for your multiple myeloma. Your healthcare provider may change your dose or schedule of medication to help manage your symptoms. Do not stop or adjust medications without discussing it with your healthcare provider.

TYPES OF GASTROINTESTINAL SYMPTOMS

- Nausea: An unpleasant feeling in the throat and stomach
- Vomiting: A forceful emptying of the stomach contents
- Constipation: Decreased frequency of defecation accompanied by discomfort and difficulty
- Diarrhea: An abnormal increase in the frequency and the amount of fluid in the stool

Always report symptoms early to your healthcare team. Keep skin clean and dry with good hygiene to prevent skin breakdown.

MANAGEMENT OF NAUSEA

You may be asked about the circumstances surrounding episodes, upper abdominal pain, pain when swallowing, hiccups or heartburn, weight loss, dizziness upon standing, and your medication history.

- General dietary and lifestyle recommendations for nausea: Eat small, frequent meals; do not eat fatty or fried foods; avoid strong odors; do not exercise after eating; wear loose clothing; begin appropriate medications before chemotherapy; and use relaxation, acupuncture, biofeedback, and guided imagery.
- Loss of appetite, still able to eat normally: Adjust dosages of medications, drink enough water and other fluids, and keep track of effects of medications in a daily diary.
- Decreased ability to eat or drink: Consider asking for different medications, and see your physician for physical examination and evaluation should the medications be causing you to feel sick.
- Inability to eat or drink: You may need hospitalization or medications through a vein. Contact your healthcare provider immediately.
- Medications that may be ordered by your healthcare team include lorazepam, prochlorperazine, promethazine, metoclopramide, ranitidine, famotidine, and dexamethasone.

MANAGEMENT OF VOMITING

You will be asked about the appearance of the fluid (whether digested or undigested), whether a trigger was involved, and whether it was new or different from other times.

- 1 episode in 24 hours: This is usually self-limiting; continue medications for nausea.
- 2–5 episodes in 24 hours: New medications, oral or through a vein, may be needed. Contact a physician immediately.

- 6 or more episodes in 24 hours: This may require hospitalization to assess fluid status and rule out bowel blockage. Contact your healthcare provider immediately.
- Medications that may be ordered by your healthcare team include aprepitant, ondansetron, and granisetron.

MANAGEMENT OF CONSTIPATION

You will be asked about any abdominal pain, bloating, nausea, vomiting, inability to urinate, confusion, and diarrhea alternating with constipation.

- Mild: Increase fluid and fiber intake, increase physical activity, and start stool softeners.
- Moderate: You may need to speak with a dietitian about your food intake; consider laxatives and stimulants.
- Severe: Bowel obstruction should be assessed by a healthcare provider. Dehydration may require fluids through a vein. Treatment for a blocked colon may be discussed. Medication changes may be ordered by a physician. Referral to a gastrointestinal specialist may be arranged by a physician.
- Medications that may be ordered by your healthcare team include docusate, senna, magnesium sulfate, magnesium citrate, lactulose, and bisacodyl.

MANAGEMENT OF DIARRHEA

You will be asked about any history of irritable bowel syndrome, colitis, diverticulitis, and medications other than routine chemotherapy. Your healthcare provider will want to know whether you have gas and whether the diarrhea is a leakage or sudden occurrence.

- Fewer than 4 stools a day: Drink more liquids. Avoid caffeinated, carbonated, heavily sugared beverages. Dietary changes may be needed, such as a decrease in fiber, greasy, or fried food. Discontinue any medications, such as over-the-counter herbal medications, that cause diarrhea. Keep the rectal area clean. Loperamide, cholestyramine, or bismuth subsalicylate may be recommended to treat the diarrhea after each loose bowel movement.
- 4–6 stools per day: Medications should be recommended, and you may need fluids and salts. Your healthcare provider must be notified if you have more than 4–6 stools per day for more than 24 hours.
- 7–9 stools per day: Hospitalization may be considered for fluid replacement. A stool culture will be ordered to see whether the diarrhea is the result of an infection, and medications will be given to control frequency. You should take very good care of your skin and use disposable pads or diapers. Cancer therapy may be stopped for a period of time, or the dose of your cancer medication may need to be changed.
- Medications that may be ordered by your healthcare team include loperamide, diphenoxylate, cholestyramine, and octreotide.

Note. Based on information from Amgen, 2016; Faiman et al., 2013; Millennium Pharmaceuticals, 2017; National Comprehensive Cancer Network, 2016; Novartis, 2015; Smith et al., 2008; Takeda Pharmaceutical Company, 2015, 2016.