

Infection (Page 1 of 2)

What is an infection?

An infection occurs when germs (such as bacteria, viruses, and fungi) enter your body and multiply. Cancer or chemotherapy can make infections more likely to occur, and they can make infections more serious than they would have been before you developed cancer.

How do I know if I have an infection?

Below is a list of changes that may occur if you have an infection. Call your doctor right away if you experience any of them.

- A fever above 100.5°F (38°C), chills, or sweating
 - Note: Do not take any medication to lower a fever without your doctor's approval
- Loose bowel movements (for example, diarrhea); changes in urination; or unusual vaginal discharge or itching
- Severe cough, sore throat, sinus pain/pressure, earache, headache, or stiff neck
- Swelling, tenderness, or blisters/sores on your mouth, lips, or skin

It is possible to have an infection without experiencing any of the changes above. So be sure to discuss any concerns with your doctor or nurse.

What is my risk of getting an infection?

It is possible to estimate your risk for getting an infection using a blood test. Ask your doctor or nurse to calculate your “absolute neutrophil count” (ANC) from your latest results, and compare it with the table below.

ANC (Neutrophils/ μ L)	Risk for Infection
1,500–2,000	No increased risk
1,000–1,500	Slightly increased risk
500–1,000	Moderately increased risk
Less than 500	Severely increased risk

Name: _____

Institution/Group: _____

Phone: _____

Notes: _____

There are medications that raise the number of germ-fighting cells in your blood and lower your risk of infection. Ask your doctor or nurse if these might be appropriate for you.

The information contained herein is not comprehensive and is intended only as a guide.

