

Important information about cancer drug shortages — and what you can do

What is happening?

There is a shortage of cancer drugs in the United States. As of May 2023, the FDA listed 17 commonly used cancer fighting drugs that are in short supply. Cis-platinum (Cisplatin) and Carbo-platinum (Carbo) are the most recent examples.

These drugs are typically generic drugs, meaning that their original patent has expired. When a patent expires, the original manufacturer often ceases production as generic drug companies begin manufacturing the drug, often at facilities located outside the U.S. This off-shore production makes the supply chain vulnerable.

In addition, the low prices generic manufacturers are paid for these drugs may lead to quality problems as manufacturing facilities are not kept up with FDA standards and instability if a manufacturer exits production of a drug in favor of another generic drug.

Why is this important?

Generic drugs are widely used for many types of cancers. They have been in use for over a decade, and oncologists have developed many treatment regimens using these drugs for adults and children. These drug combinations are highly effective in prolonging life, and in many cases increase the chances of a cure. In many situations if a drug is not available an equally effective drug or regimen can be substituted following established national guidelines. Your oncologists may also consult with colleagues at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center or other NCI Designated Cancer Centers on recommended treatments options.

What can I do?

- **First**, your oncology team will let you know if your treatment may be impacted by a drug shortage and what steps can be taken to find the best solution for your cancer situation.
- **Second**, reach out to Connecticut U.S. Senators Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy, as well as your U.S. Representative.

Here's how:

- **Scan the QR code** to find your legislators, and their contact information. Although the FDA has oversight of drug safety and availability, the FDA needs Congress to give it additional authority to address the underlying issues. Explain that the problems are not with one or two drugs, but that this is a long-standing issue that requires fundamental changes to ensure a stable supply of drugs to treat cancer and some non-cancer diseases such as asthma.
- **For a letter template that you can use or modify**, visit www.HartfordHealthCare.org/cancerdrugs. Copy and paste your letter onto your legislator's web site, which is how they prefer to hear from their constituents.



What we are doing.

Our oncology pharmacists monitor the drug supply daily and work closely with your physicians, advanced practice clinicians, nurses and your cancer team to ensure that your treatment is the best for your health. We will keep you informed of any supply problems with your cancer treatments and we will partner with you to ensure that improving your health always comes first.