

Heidi Schmidtke was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia when she was 18. During her illness, the staff at Roswell Park Cancer Institute encouraged her to write advice for coping with the disease. They did so because of her constant smile, her positive attitude, her willingness to share her struggle with others, and her inspiration to those around her.



We hope that her advice will help improve the quality of your experience as you face the difficult days ahead.

For more information and a complete version of Heidi's advice, go to Heidishats.com or Heidisday.com

Some last minute thoughts.

1. You're still alive – that's a blessing.
2. No one can ever take away your experiences.
3. Make your life better than it was before.
4. Take the lessons you've learned and teach someone else.
5. Keep smiling and laughing!!!
6. Congratulations on being a strong person.
7. Find people who will support you through good and bad.
8. You will have both.
9. Pay attention to the good stuff.
10. Find a hobby.
11. If you love it, do it.
12. If you don't, find a new hobby.
13. Exercise the best you can.
14. Take help when you need it.
15. You will probably need it.
16. Take a day to be miserable; then snap out of it.
17. Eat the foods you love; If you can't eat the foods you love, find new foods.
18. Life is different now; adapt.
19. It won't be easy... but it may be better.
20. Try to give back to those who were there for you.
21. The doctors are not trying to torture you.
22. You always have the right to question!
23. Relearn why you're on what med.
24. Drink a lot before blood draws.
25. Do something that you always wanted to do, but never got around to.
26. Life is truly beautiful.
27. Travel, if you can.
28. It's still okay to feel yucky.
29. It's still okay to be tired.
30. Catnaps are a good thing.
31. Listen to a child's laughter.
32. Listen to your favorite music, often
33. Don't just read self-help books; self-help.
34. Do not forget all that you have been through.
35. Don't dwell, either.
36. Play lots of games.
37. Keep active.
38. Thank people more.
39. Thank your God more.
40. Thank yourself more.
41. Keep living.



So you have

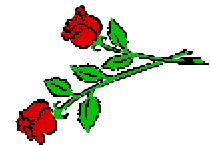
Cancer

written by

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Here are some ways to combat the difficulties that you will invariably face...



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As an Inpatient



1. Walk! (It helps nausea and it gives you something to do!)
2. Question EVERYTHING that you don't understand.
3. Know ALL your meds.
4. Smile! (You'll get a good reputation and you'll be surprised how much better you'll feel!)
5. Bring in food. (Hospital food may be better than airplane food, but yuck!)
6. Be nice to the nurses. (You spend the most time with them!)
7. Be nice to everybody else.
8. Do crossword puzzles.
9. Remember ... you will feel better.
10. Make good use of physical therapy.
11. Make good use of the psychologists.
12. Make good use of occupational therapy.
13. Make good use of pastoral care.
14. Make good use of the social workers.
15. Play Yahtzee.
16. Bring in your own pillow.
17. Accept the fact that you will be interrupted every time you try to sleep.
18. Wear your own nightgown/pajamas – preferably newly bought
19. Bring your own toilet paper (much softer).
20. Bring your own tissues (ditto).
21. Decorate your room with comforting pictures.
22. Thank those that help you.
23. Remember --- you will get to go home.
24. Ask for sedation with painful procedures. If it still hurts ... ask for more!
25. It's okay to be frightened and scared.
26. Surround yourself with those you love and those who love you.
27. Accept thoughts and prayers from anyone and any religion.
28. The doctors and nurses are there to help you.
29. Make a list of the things you want to do after the hospital: no matter how bizarre.
30. Get to know fellow patients – they know what you're going through.
31. Follow the rules and restrictions – they are there for a reason.

32. Get socks with treads
33. Your skin will get dry – Moisturize!
34. Laugh as often as you can. (Endorphins are great medicine!)



Surviving Chemotherapy (Outpatient)



35. Do as much independently as you can.
36. Ask for help if you need it.
37. Eat as much as you can.
38. You will be tired – nap when you need to.
39. Come to terms with losing your hair. You are still beautiful.
40. Get a wig, if that makes you more comfortable.
41. Make use of the hospitality room at the hospital.
42. For women: put on makeup, dress up and feel as pretty as you can. (When you look better, you feel better.)
43. Have a date with your significant other. (This does not mean you have to go out, but it's nice to feel loved.)
44. Show your appreciation for the things people do.
45. It's okay to need to cry.
46. The chemo/infusion lab is moving as efficiently as possible – try to be patient.
47. Take your meds.
48. Keep laughing.
49. Keep the nurse practitioner and the doctor informed with how you're really feeling.
50. The less you see a doctor, the fewer your problems generally are.
51. You will probably need blood or platelets. Appreciate the donors.
52. If you can afford it, buy a treadmill and a headphone.
53. If not, walk around the block, walk the stairs, walk someplace. Keep active.
54. Drink, drink, drink fluids.
55. Don't drink alcohol.
56. Don't smoke.
57. Have visitors that make you happy.
58. Do your mouth care.
59. It's okay to have a bad day.
60. Shots can hurt – Sorry!
61. Mouth sores can hurt – Sorry!

62. Hemorrhoids can hurt – Sorry!
63. Vomiting and diarrhea may occur. Remember, it will stop.
64. Play games ... have fun.
65. Tell those you love that you love them.
66. Take nausea medication – it helps.
67. Chemo is difficult – it ends.
68. You will feel better when your counts come back: I promise.
69. Take care of your line or port, if you have one.
70. It's okay to veg out and watch TV.
71. Know your blood counts.
72. You are stronger than you think.
73. Some friends will go; let them.
74. Some friends will stay; embrace them.



Surviving Radiation



75. Nap when you get tired.
76. When you feel badly, let someone know.
77. When you feel good, enjoy it.
78. Radiation is much easier than chemotherapy. Appreciate the change.
79. Be nice to the technicians. You're going to see them every day.
80. Become friendly with the patients in the waiting room. It will give you something to look forward to every day.
81. Go out to lunch.
82. Go see a movie.
83. Be careful around crowds. Avoid them when possible.
84. It's still okay to have a bad day.
85. Relax and pamper yourself.
86. Keep walking and exercising.
87. Read, if it makes you happy.
88. Write, if it makes you happy.
89. Sing, if it makes you happy.
90. Don't do these things, if they don't.
91. Anything can be fun: Find the fun in radiation.
92. Enjoy your weekend off.
93. Radiation will end.
94. If you have a mass or lump, enjoy watching it diminish in size.
95. Laughter is still the best medicine.
96. You are strong enough to do this.