When You Become a Real Life Zombie

It all sounds so awful when you say it out loud, but I just have to deal with it if I want to be better.

September 25, 2017 By Amanda Hayes

I think this one will be about how chemo makes me feel. It's a difficult one to explain but also it might be something that not everyone feels when they have chemo. This is my reaction to the drug. And it's difficult to explain when the effects have worn off because I try my hardest to remember how it makes me feel but at the time that's all I feel but when I'm better I forget. Sounds crazy, right! But everything is so easily forgotten when you feel better.

So there is a thing called chemo brain. And I guess that is what I'm suffering with at the end of the day but that's not really what I thought it would be called. Chemo brain sounds like you're forgetful or it affects your mental ability… And I guess in a way it does. But my experience is nothing to what I imagined.

So the day of chemo my reactions are all pretty immediate. I generally get a huge dose of antihistamines, which is basically a syringe full of Pirton. This is to help my body cope with the chemo paclitaxel… You know, first time anaphylaxis. This prevents any reactions occurring but it also makes me very very drowsy. So pretty much for the day of chemo I'm in and out of sleep. It's a great way of killing an 8-hour day but it still drags… And my poor mum still has to suffer through it along with me.

One of the first things to change with chemo is my taste. This doesn't normally last. Just for 4-5 days. I'm not sure how I can explain it, it's like I've got wax in my mouth or my mouth is all cotton wool like, I can't taste flavours as well, and things aren't as appealing. I struggle to eat meat at this point coz the texture of it can be very off-putting.

Followed closely from the tastelessness is the nausea. This is probably a big factor to the chemo reactions. As I suffer with nausea this means that my appetite reduces. It's tough to find what I fancy to eat and I try so hard to eat what's good for me. I have 4/5 different types of anti-nausea pills which help combat any actual sickness but it makes my mouth even more woolly and changes tastes even more.

Chemo affects you mentally too. I go very spaced out for a few days. I find it better on these days when people don't talk to me. It sounds so silly but I find it so hard to concentrate on texts and function on what I should be saying. It sounds so crazy, right! It's like there's a massive fog over my brain that prevents me from focusing properly on what I should be doing. I zone out easily. I literally become some sort of chemo zombie. I don't just think it's in my head though. It weirdly

affects my eye sight. Not in an awful way and it only lasts for about 3/4 days after and then I'm fine I just get this ring of haze around my sight and this makes focusing difficult. It's like my brain just gives up trying to focus on what I should be doing.

I become a ghost to any social media and friends seem to know they won't get a lot out of me on those days.

It all sounds so awful what I have to deal with when you say it out loud but you just have to deal with it. This is my life. If I want to be better then I have to deal with these after effects.

I have to apologise in advance for this post too. I'm still very foggy headed this morning so this post has taken me longer than usual to write and I'm sorry if it drags off in weird directions or doesn't make much sense! It's a real life struggle for me this zombie brain thing but it's easier to explain when you're actually mulling yourself through it then if I write it in a few days time when it's a distant memory.

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