

What should you expect now you have completed your chemotherapy treatments

Finishing Chemotherapy

This leaflet is designed to look at issues that you may face after your chemotherapy has finished.

Everyone is an individual and will recover in their own time and at different rates.

You may also find that you miss the close support of the hospital and the staff that you had during your treatment.

The leaflet will look at some of the side effects that you may continue to experience and may worry about over the coming months.

The aim is to provide you with ways of coping and hopefully pointing you in the right direction if you need extra support and advice.

Details of useful resources are included in this leaflet.

Reduced Immunity

You are still at risk of infection after completing chemotherapy.

Your blood counts should return to normal limits over a period of three to six weeks after completing your last treatment.

However if in this period of time you experience any high or low temperatures, shivering/shaking feeling unwell you must still refer to the separate leaflet called 'The oncology and Haematology 24 hour Helpline' for advice.

Tiredness

Tiredness and fatigue can build slowly while you are having chemotherapy.

If you have also had surgery and or radiotherapy as part of your treatment this can also cause tiredness/fatigue.

Individuals will recover their energy levels at different rates but it could last for anything up to six months to a year, sometimes longer.

Things to do to help yourself

- Plan activities for times when you feel less tired.
- Allow for rest times during your day.
- Undertake gentle exercise and build slowly.
- Do not push yourself to be able to do everything that you did before chemotherapy, just because you've finished your treatment, it will take time.
- If you are returning to work, if possible discuss with your manager going back on a phased return rather than returning on your full hours straight away.

Pins and needles (neuropathy)

Some chemotherapies can cause tingling and numbness in your fingers and toes.

This can often get worse before it gets better and can take as long as six months to a year to settle down.

On occasion these sensations may not completely resolve.

Excessive heat or cold may make the sensations worse, if this is the case you may need to ensure you wear extra protective clothing such as gloves and thick socks if it is cold that makes it worse, if it is heat that affects it more try to keep cool.

Please contact your GP if you are experiencing pain or discomfort that is not settling or improving over time.

Lymphoedema

Lymphoedema usually affects an arm or a leg but can also affect other parts of the body.

It is swelling that can develop due to removal of lymph nodes due to surgery or damage to lymph nodes due to radiotherapy.

Preventing lymphoedema

- Wear gloves to protect your hands when doing DIY or gardening.
- Avoid sun damage to your skin.
- Clean any cuts immediately to reduce the risk of infection.
- Do not allow anyone to take bloods or take a blood pressure from your affected limb.
- Avoid getting scratched by pets.
- If you are worried you have a problem then please consult your GP/specialist nurse (if you have one) for advice and if needed they can refer you to the lymphoedema nurses.

Signs of Lymphoedema

- Swelling
- Heaviness of the limb
- Dry, itchy skin
- Stiffness and limited movement
- Discomfort to the limb
- Redness/rash to the limb

Hair loss

If you have lost your hair due to the chemotherapy you will notice it start to grow back about 4 to 6 weeks after completion of your chemotherapy.

It may come back with a different colour, come back curly or be a different texture, wear your wig or your scarf until you feel comfortable to show off your new hairdo.

Try to wait at least four to five months before you have your hair coloured, it would be advisable to have a patch test done before having a full head of hair colouring, your scalp may also be sensitive, use a semi-permanent dye initially to see how you feel.

Dental work

You will need to wait at least 6-8 weeks before going to see your dentist.

If you are continuing on a treatment called Zoledronic acid (zometa) then you should speak to your nurse at the hospital before having any dental work undertaken.

Feelings and emotions

There is no right or wrong way to feel after you have finished your chemotherapy.

Your feelings can also change as time moves on.

You may feel isolated or insecure as you are no longer seeing the doctors and nurses who were looking after you.

If you are going to continue with chemotherapy again at some point this may cause you stress and anxiety about having to face it again.

There are support groups available and for further information and advice please contact the Cancer Information Service based within both Calderdale Royal Hospital and Huddersfield Royal Infirmary.

- The Jayne Garforth Macmillan Information Centre, Macmillan Unit CRH 01422 222709
- Cancer Information Resource Room, Greenlea Unit Ward 7 HRI 01484 343614
- Email cancer.information@nhs.net

Who to contact for information

You may have had a specialist nurse allocated to you throughout your chemotherapy; these can be accessed for help and advice on the contact number that you were given by them at the start of your treatment.

Your GP will have been kept informed of your treatment plan and could also be a source of help and advice for you once your treatment has finished.

If you are going to be having further chemotherapy treatments then you will have been given further follow up appointments to continue seeing your Consultant where you can also discuss any issues you may have.

The Cancer Information Service based within both hospitals can offer information and advice for anyone affected by cancer. Signposting/Referral to local services and support such as:

- Emotional Wellbeing
- Activity and Exercise
- Social/Financial concerns
- Local and National support groups
- Local services/agencies
- Help with Travel Insurance

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

The Macmillan Unit
Calderdale Royal Hospital
Telephone No: (01422) 222700

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ یا زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو
برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

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