

# Patient Wellness information record

## Oncology Haematology Services

Our goal is to have a care philosophy of *Wellness, rather than illness*, through treatment for cancer by implementing this *Wellness* care charter.

### The Wellness care charter focuses on:

- A positive outlook based on the sickness wellness continuum
- Cancer treatment being an event in your life, not THE event in your life
- Staff consider patients in a "Wellness" light which encourages patients' confidence in participation in care and decisions.
- Visual and verbal assessment of patient care before physical assessment so automatic 'nursing' interventions don't reinforce a sickness perspective.
- Individual focus – not doing 'activities' because that's what chemotherapy units 'do' but undertaking activities from the needs of the individual.
- Facilitating positive conversations
- Light positive colours with a calm, laughter filled atmosphere and family/ community environment of support.

have the ability to reproduce themselves by cell division: one cell becomes two, two cells become four and so on. This allows tissues to grow and develop, and repair themselves after injury.

In normal tissue, cell division follows an orderly pattern. This orderly pattern may be disrupted and cause abnormal growth which may lead to the build up of a mass of tissue, called a tumour. The tumour may be large but remain self-contained and not spread to other parts of the body; these tumours are benign.

Malignant tumours, or cancers that are not self-contained, can invade neighbouring tissues and organs, or spread to other parts of the body through the lymphatic system and blood stream, forming new growths called secondaries or metastases.

The treatment of cancer depends on the type of tumour, where it began and if it has spread. Many cancers can be successfully treated, especially if detected early. The main forms of treatment are surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy and biological therapies.

Some cancers are better treated with chemotherapy alone, or in addition to surgery or radiotherapy. Thus many cancers, but not all, are managed today by more than one type of treatment.

REF: Cancer Council 'Understanding Chemotherapy – a guide for people with cancer and their families and friends'

## What is cancer?

Cancer is a disease of the body's cells. Cells are the very small building blocks of the various parts of the body, for example the skin, lungs, liver and stomach. Cells differ in shape and function but

### For enquiries or assistance

**North Lakes Haematology Oncology Clinic**  
Tel: (07) 3833 6755

**Sunshine Coast Haematology & Oncology Clinic**  
Tel: (07) 5495 0000 | Fax: (07) 5479 5050



**NORTH LAKES**  
HAEMATOTOLOGY & ONCOLOGY CLINIC  
- Montserrat Cancer Care -



**SUNSHINE COAST**  
HAEMATOTOLOGY & ONCOLOGY CLINIC  
- Montserrat Cancer Care -

## What is chemotherapy?

Chemotherapy is a drug or medication that is in use to fight cancer. It comes in many different forms, for example topical cream, tablet, injection or an infusion into a vein. It can work in many different ways so the type, strength and way in which it is given administered depends on the type of cancer being treated.

Chemotherapy affects some normal cells in the body as well as the cancer cells. The good news is that most normal cells recover quicker than the cancer cells, which allows the body to tolerate and recover from the chemotherapy but still have an effect on the cancer. For this reason chemotherapy is given repeatedly in cycles for a certain amount of time.

The most common cells in the body affected by chemotherapy are:

- Blood cells
- Cells involved along the gastrointestinal tract from the mouth through to the bottom.
- Skin, nails and hair
- Nerve cells

## How will I feel while on chemotherapy?

As we are all different individuals the way you may feel during or after chemotherapy may be different to someone else. This can depend on the drugs being administered, the type of cancer being treated, age, being male or female, any other illnesses that you may have and your general condition.

The most common complaint of chemotherapy is fatigue or feeling tired at some stage during treatment.

## How is chemotherapy given?

Most chemotherapy is given in a cyclic nature. That is a plan of one or more medications given over a period of time (1 cycle) and then repeated several times. This all depends on the type of cancer being treated and if radiotherapy or surgery is being combined as part of the treatment.

During these cycles of chemotherapy you may be asked to have ongoing investigations such as blood tests, x-ray, ultrasound or a cat scan.

This is a guide to chemotherapy and treatment only and is not an exclusive list of potential complication or side effect. Advice should always be sort from your doctor.

Initially all the information and instructions given to you are confusing but you will develop a routine that is repetitive and things will fall into place. Keeping track of things can be made easier by using your phone, tablet, or calendar and keeping this booklet updated will help.

How will this my diagnosis and treatment affect my close family and friends?

Most of us have different ways of coping with difficult situations. This can include behaviour that may be helpful or not so helpful. The cancer council has a booklet 'Coping with cancer' which may assist you.

Sometimes family members or friends may find themselves in the role of carer. This may include tasks such as helping around the home, organising health care, personal care, a shoulder to lean on and a set of ears to listen.

This can be a little and challenging at times and the carer may also need support.

This is available from different agencies such as the Cancer Council Ph. 131120; Carers Advisory Centre Ph. 1800242636.

If you require any further information please ask your doctor or nurse.

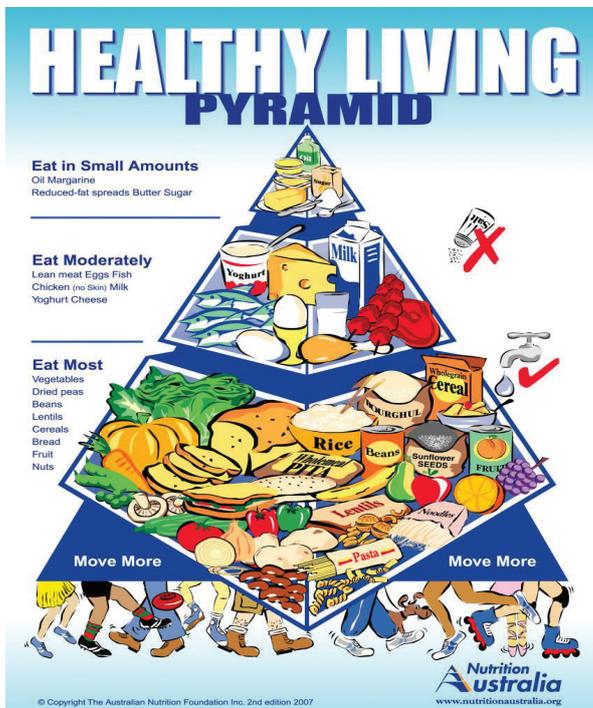
## What can I eat and drink?

Food and beverages – some days you will feel like eating and some days you won't. Therefore, try to keep a well balanced diet and eat foods that you enjoy. Keep hydrated by drinking plenty of water is great.

### Some Tips

- We encourage plenty of water drinking up to 2 L per day unless otherwise instructed by your doctor or nurse.
- Enjoy your food and chose foods with good calories levels.
- You can drink alcohol in moderation if you are over 18 and wish to. National guidelines for alcohol consumptions are on [need correct link here](#)
- Ensure all food handling is done hygienically with cleaning and separation of raw meats.
- Ensure food is stored at the correct temperatures
- Wash fruit and vegetables
- When dining out ensure food is freshly prepared and cooked, e.g. avoid take-away food

- If you are taking food or vitamin supplements' talk to your doctor or nurse.
- Eat your normal well balanced diet. It is recommended that you eat smaller portions of food regularly, 5 times per day.
- Have some pre-prepared food if possible ready for the days after your treatment.



<http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au>  
<http://www.nutritionaustralia.org/qld>

## Exercise

You may feel tired during chemotherapy but exercise will help. It is also great for maintaining your physical strength and fitness. Yes, you can take it easy just incorporate some type of gentle exercise as well.

### Exercise helps with

- Boosting energy
- Reducing stress
- Makes you feel good
- Maintains muscles tone, strength and posture
- Provides fitness

## Sexuality

Sharing closeness and intimacy are vital to a healthy relationship. You and your partner may find this a challenging time and be uncertain on how to approach this subject. Being open and honest about any concerns can help. Remember holding, touching, hugs and kisses are still important expression of love and caring.

Your feelings and emotions can be like being on a roller-coaster while on chemotherapy. In

addition to this some of the side effects from medications can change mood, libido, and the body's secretions or function. For women, sexual intimacy may require extra a lubrication gel.

It is not advisable to conceive a child while on chemotherapy due to the side effects of the medications. Contraception must be used for this reason.

If you have any question or concerns please discuss this further with your doctor or nurse.

## Your treatment journey

You will be given an appointment time for your first treatment

Prior to your treatment you will have been given the opportunity to ask questions and be given information about your treatment regime by your doctor and nurse at the oncology clinic. If you do not understand any information please do not hesitate to ask a member of you health care team. The contact for the clinic is at the front of this booklet.

Prior to treatment it is advisable to see your dentist for an oral checkup.

This can be a scary time for you and your family. If you are feeling overwhelmed by this please make contact with your oncology clinic and let them know.

## Items to have in the house

- Important phone numbers close to the phone
- Food and drinks that you like
- A thermometer
- Electrolyte replacement drinks or ice-blocks
- Current prescriptions or medications organised

## What you need to do prior and during your treatment

- Have blood test or other investigations as instructed. You will have been given a request form from your doctor.
- If you have any questions for your nurse or doctor that are not urgent write them down in your dairy so you can discuss this at your next appointment.
- Try and get some house hold chores done in advance of your treatments, this allows you rest as you need.
- Enjoy you daily activities that includes family and friends

## Tips for the morning of treatment

- Have your normal food and drink but please avoid a lot of coffee or tea before treatment.
- Wear comfortable clothes with easy access to your arms or chest in you have a Port-a-cath (vein access device).
- During your visit you will be provided with morning/afternoon tea and lunch depending of your appointment time and how long you will be staying with us.
- There is Wi-Fi and power available for you so bring your technology if you wish
- Please bring this booklet.

## Tips during your stay at the day hospital

- You are welcome to bring family or friends – 1 support person is preferred.
- Enjoy your surroundings and the view
- This is the opportunity to ask any questions of your nurse and or doctor.
- You may not feel unwell during treatment – if you do you must notify your nurse immediately.
- Have a look on the notice board for any upcoming events.
- If you need anything please ask your doctor or nurse – for example
  - » Blood test request
  - » Prescriptions
  - » Referral to another health professional
  - » Planning your treatment
  - » Managing side effects

## Chemotherapy in the home

Chemotherapy be given at home in certain cases, e.g. when you are taking chemotherapy tablets, or have an infusion via a pump attached to a long term vein access device. Chemotherapy can also be excreted in your body fluids (urine, faeces, blood and vomit).

## Some important tips

- Chemotherapy tablets must only be handled by you and wash your hands immediately after touching the tablets. Protect any surface from contact with the tablets with a disposable paper towel or tissue and discard in a plastic bag in the general waste.
- Chemotherapy tablets are to be taken whole
- You must keep out of reach of children
- Chemotherapy infusions can easily be managed at home. The packaging must remain intact at all times with no signs of leaking fluid or powder. Your nurse will give you further information as needed.

## Chemotherapy and your body fluids

Your body does not absorb all of the chemotherapy that you receive. It can take up to 7 days for your body to remove all the waste. In these 7 days it is essential that your body fluids are discarded appropriately. This is to avoid exposing anyone unnecessarily to small repeated amounts of chemotherapy. We are just playing it safe in the community.

### This includes

- A full flush of the toilet with the seat lid down
- Colostomy or ileostomy bags should be double bagged and placed in the general waste.
- Incontinence pads should be double bagged and placed in the general waste
- Urine, faeces, blood or vomit spilled on a surface should be cleaned up using soap/detergent and water with disposable rags or paper towel. All waste is to be double bagged and placed in the general waste.
- Laundering of clothing and linen that is soiled with urine, faeces, blood or vomit should be washed separately from other household items on a full long wash cycle, rinsed well and line dry if possible.
- With normal everyday clothing and soiling you are not required to separate wash.
- You can do no harm with kissing and hugging your loved ones as long as there are no signs and symptoms of infection as you will be more susceptible to infection during treatment phases.
- If someone other than yourself is cleaning up body fluids they should be wearing gloves.
- It is OK to use your septic tank. Maintenance workers who service the septic tank should be advised that cytotoxic waste has been disposed of. If you are unsure please contact the septic tank supplier for further advice.

## Potential changes in your body due to chemotherapy

### Lowered Blood Cells

Your blood cells such as red blood cells (their job is to carry oxygen to all cells around the body), white blood cells (fight infections) and Platelets (clot your blood when bleeding) may be temporarily lowered by the chemotherapy. This can happen at certain times during your treatment, we know this is happening through blood tests.

The lowering of red blood cells can be temporarily fixed by a blood transfusion.

The lowering of platelets means you may bruise and/or bleed a little more easily.

The lowering of white blood cells means that you will be a greater risk for infections.

### Tips on how to avoid an infection

- Good hand washing before and after food handling, eating and toileting
- Careful food storage and preparation to avoid food poisoning (esp. take-away food)
- Avoid anyone with an obvious infection – e.g. active cough
- Try to keep skin and nails intact
- Avoid scratching and causing damage to your skin
- Avoid exposing your unprotected skin and eyes to sunlight. It is a good idea to always wear good sunglasses and apply sunscreen to exposed skin and lips, cover up with clothing and avoid the intense midday sunlight.
- Undertake regular mouth care which includes (see mouth care section)

### Fatigue

Feeling tired, no energy, combined sometimes with muscle weakness is common on chemotherapy. Therefore maintain an exercise regime and your normal activities as much as possible and try to reduce unwanted stress will help.

Be safe, stay on your feet.

Sometimes you may feel unsteady or dizzy when getting up from being seated or during/after having a bath or shower.

Things you can do to avoid this are:

- Maintain your water intake
- Eat well
- Exercise
- Wear good fitting shoes with a low heel
- Take your time moving from a seated position to walking – stand, count to 10 before you move away from the seat
- Ensure your shower is not too hot and have a seat close by.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse if you suffer from dizziness.

### Sleep disturbances

Due to stress and some medication you may have some problems with sleeping. It is more common for the first 2 days after your chemotherapy.

This is a guide to chemotherapy and treatment only and is not an exclusive list of potential complication or side effect. Advice should always be sort from your doctor.

### Tips that may help

- Reduce your coffee and tea intake at night.
- Cup of warm milk at night
- Relaxation with music and deep breathing
- A warm bath
- Medication
- Write your thoughts in a diary

### Mouth care

Maintaining a healthy mucosa and teeth is important to reduce your risk for infection and improves your ability to taste and eat well.

### Tips to maintain good oral hygiene

- See your dentist prior to commencing chemotherapy
- Drink plenty of fluids, sipping regularly helps
- Keep your lips moist with lip balm that includes a sunblock
- Avoid alcohol or ethanol based mouth washes.
- Use a soft tooth brush, brushing teeth only 2–3 times per day
- Floss your teeth gently ensuring you do not cause any damage to your gums
- Please notify your nurse or doctor if you have any jaw pain or seeing a dentist during treatment.
- Rinse your mouth 4 times per day with warm salt water or sodium bicarbonate mouth rinse, such as
  - » ½ teaspoon of salt to one glass (200 mL) water OR
  - » 1 teaspoon of sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) to one glass (200 mL) water
- If you develop changes in your mouth during chemotherapy please let you nurse or doctor know.

### Feeling like you want to be sick? (nausea)

This side effect is commonly talked about with chemotherapy. The good news is with the introduction of new medications given prior to chemotherapy the prevention of nausea and vomiting has greatly improved.

The intensity of this feeling can be affected by the individual, the medications being used and the different combination of therapy.

To prevent feeling nausea you will receive medication to prevent before your treatment and to take home. It is important that you take these medications as directed.

## Tips on how to avoid feeling sick

- Eat small amounts frequently
- Eat what you feel like
- Ginger product may help if you like them
- Take it easy for 30 minutes after eating
- Take medication as directed
- Prepare meals in advance to avoid cooking smells
- Frequent sips of water
- Acupressure
- Meditation
- Relaxation

Contact your doctor or nurse if you are unable to manage your nausea.

## Difficulty doing a “number 2“! (Constipation)

Perhaps your lifestyle has changed with your diagnosis. And some of the medications that we use can cause constipation, in particular some of the anti-sickness drugs. This generally can happen for the first few days after chemotherapy.

## Tips on how to avoid or manage constipation

- Drink plenty of water
- Exercise
- Eat
  - » Food with fibre
  - » Drink juices with fibre in them
  - » Have a regular meal plan
  - » Drink hot beverages
- Take medication as directed – you can buy most medication over the counter at your chemist. Sometimes it is recommended that you start medication for constipation the day of chemotherapy in prevention.

It is not advisable to have longer than 2 days without bowel motion. Please contact your nurse if this is the case.

## Diarrhoea

This may happen depending on the chemotherapy regime given, previous surgery or health condition. Infection can also cause diarrhoea. Therefore it is very important if you have diarrhoea for more than 24 hours (more than 4–5 motions in 24 hours) or if it is uncontrolled please notify your nurse or doctor immediately.

Dehydration is a consequence of diarrhoea and can make you feel quite washed out and unwell. It can be easily prevented or resolved with drinking fluids or fluids being given at the clinic through a drip.

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## Tips on how to manage diarrhoea

- Drink plenty of water and include some electrolyte replacement drinks
- Avoid high fibre foods and juices
- Avoid spicy or fried foods
- Avoid temperature hot foods
- Eat small frequent bland foods
- Choose low fibre foods
- Take medication as directed such as
  - » Imodium
  - » Gastrostop
  - » Loperamide
- Notify your doctor or nurse if you have more than 4–5 loose watery bowel motions (diarrhoea).

Please see the list at the back of this booklet for food and fibre content.

## Hair loss

Not everyone loses their hair. It depends on the type of chemotherapy that you will receive.

The other good news is that this is temporary and hair growth will begin to return 6 weeks after chemotherapy has finished.

Changes in hair condition and thinning can occur. This can be continual during treatment.

Some people can lose the majority of the hair on their head, eyebrow, eyelashes and pubic hair. This can happen at different stages.

Hair on the head generally falls out within 2–3 weeks after your first dose of chemotherapy.

Your scalp may become temporarily tender during this process. A silk or satin pillow slip can help while resting and sleeping. Some people can get relief by cutting their hair short.

## Tips on managing hair loss

- You may like to do attend a “look good feel better” event at the cancer council – PH 131120
- Use a gentle shampoo
- Protect you scalp from the sun
- Keep your skin moisturised
- Your head will easily get cold. You may need a
  - » Wig
  - » Hat
  - » Scarf
  - » Turban

Please ask your nurse for local contact details of suppliers.

## Important information

How do I make contact with my oncology clinic?

### Phone

- **During office hours 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday** you may call your oncology clinic and speak to a nurse.
- **During afterhours and on the weekend** you can telephone the doctor on call for advice.

If you feel unwell at any time during chemotherapy check your temperature. If it is above 38°C you must make contact with your oncology clinic, general practitioner (GP), or accident and emergency department at your local public hospital immediately.

It's important to act quickly and not wait if you have a fever while on chemotherapy, no matter the time of day or night.

## Alert card

### Chemotherapy & Possible Neutropenia

If I am unwell and/or have a temperature above 38°C.

#### This is a medical emergency

Please contact  
Sunshine Coast Haematology and  
Oncology Clinic  
Phone: 5479 0000

My Specialist's name is: .....

Phone: .....

My GP's name is: .....

Phone: .....

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