



# Understanding Your Treatment

Oncology & Haematology Day Unit  
Weston General Hospital

# What Is Cancer?

Here is a short video from Macmillan Cancer Support, which gives an overview of what Cancer is:

<https://youtu.be/agpUuqrpAjQ>



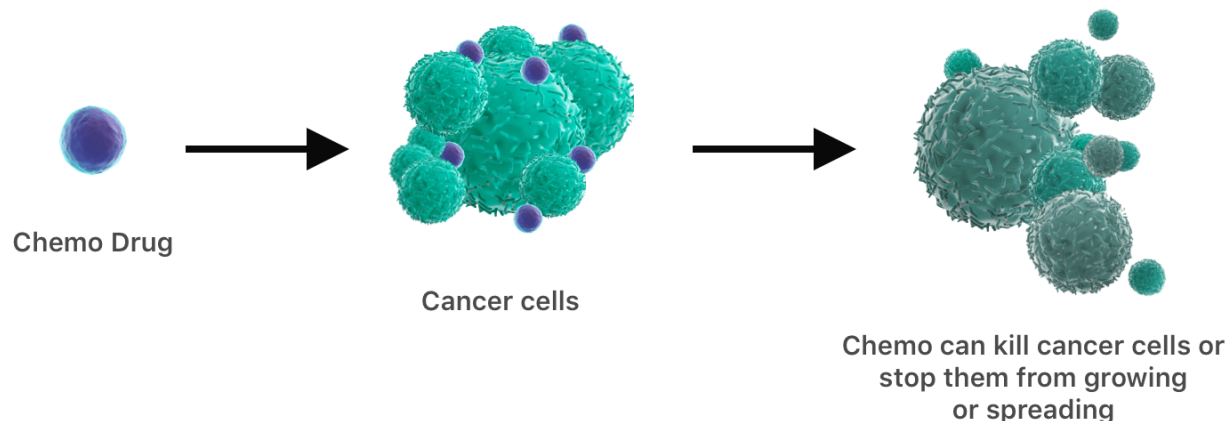
# What Is Chemotherapy?



- It is a drug treatment
- It kills Cancer Cells
- It can be given in combination with other treatments/medicines

# How Does Chemotherapy Work?

- It enters the blood stream
- It kills cells
- Causes potential side effects



# How is Chemotherapy Given?

- Oral-Tablets
- Subcutaneous (S/C) injection under the skin
- Intravenous (IV) into the vein via a PICC line or a Cannula



# While You Are Having Treatment

- If you need to go to the toilet please ask. You'll be required to take your drip with you. It's important to try not to knock or pull your IV line or cannula
- Please let your nurse know as soon as possible if you experience any redness, discomfort, swelling or any leakage around the cannula at any time, as this could cause damage to your skin



# How Long Will it Take?

- It depends on the type of treatment
- From 1hour-8hours
- Treatment is given in cycles and can be daily, weekly, 2 weekly, 3 weekly or 4 weekly depending on the regime
- The Oncology & Haematology Day Unit will confirm your specific regime details when they call.





# Possible Side Effects

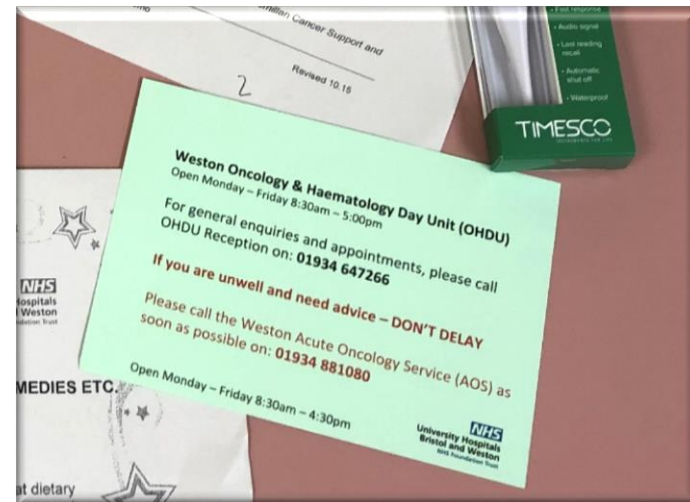
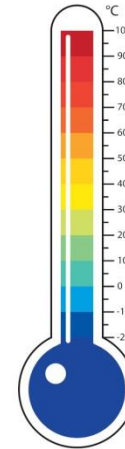
Your Nurse will talk you through possible side effects for your specific chemotherapy regime when you attend the Oncology & Haematology Day Unit for your Pre-Chemotherapy Clinic appointment.





# Infection

- Chemotherapy destroys your white blood cells and neutrophils which help you fight infection
- You are more vulnerable to infection whilst receiving chemotherapy
- You are most at risk 5-14 days after chemotherapy



# Feeling Unwell?



- Take your temperature when you feel unwell
- If your temperature is above **37.5c** or you feel shivery or ache, **seek medical advice immediately!**
- Remember paracetamol can mask a temperature



# Neutropenic Sepsis Alert Card

**Neutropenic Sepsis Alert Card** Weston Area Health NHS Trust

This patient is receiving chemotherapy and is at risk of neutropenic sepsis

Patient Addressograph

This card provides authority for RNs qualified in IV drug administration to administer a stat dose of antibiotics at Weston General Hospital without prior medical review. November 2017

Antibiotic Allergies: (Must be completed)

☐ None ☐ Penicillin(anaphylaxis) ☐ Penicillin(mild-moderate) ☐ Other.....

**If the patient presents with fever >38° OR <36° and/or with signs/symptoms of infection AT ANY TIME**

1. Immediately take FBC, Blood cultures, CRP, U&Es, LFTs, Albumin & Lactate

2. Administer IV antibiotics **IMMEDIATELY** -  
**DO NOT WAIT FOR BLOODS OR MEDICAL ASSESSMENT**

(prescriber to delete as appropriate) **Tazocin® 4.5G** (if no penicillin allergy)  
OR  
**Meropenem 1G** (if mild-moderate penicillin allergy)  
OR  
**Ciprofloxacin 400mg** (if previous anaphylaxis to penicillin)

Signed ..... Print Name .....

GMC/NMC ..... Expiry Date .....

- All patients on chemotherapy and/or a haematological diagnosis known to be at risk **of neutropenic sepsis** will be given an alert card
- It is important to carry the card **at all times** and should be presented to Medical staff if you attend feeling unwell
- This is your prescription which enables you to be given antibiotics more quickly

# Tips for avoiding infection

- Practice good personal hygiene
- Avoid contact with others
- Take care when gardening, handling animals or building materials
- Try and eat well and drink plenty
- Maintain good oral hygiene
- Have vaccines if offered

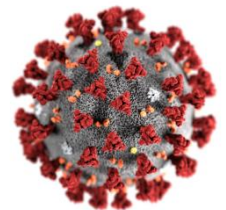


# COVID-19

**If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 please do not come into the hospital**

- A high temperature
- A new continuous cough
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste

**Telephone the Acute Oncology Service (AOS) for advice**



# Effects on your blood

- Chemotherapy may reduce the number of red cells and platelets in your blood



- You may be offered a transfusion of blood or platelets to restore your blood count.
- Cancer can increase your risk of developing blood clots

# Effects on Your Hair

- Not all chemotherapy causes hair loss.
- Hair loss generally starts 2-3 weeks after 1st chemo, and tends to come out in patches.



- Your scalp may become tender when the hair is about to come out.
- Hair loss can be reduced using a cold cap.



# Nausea/Vomiting

- Is different for everyone – you are more likely to feel sick (nausea) rather than be sick (vomiting)
- Sickness can be mild, moderate to severe
- Anti sickness medication is given before chemotherapy and you will go home with tablets to take if you need them
- Other ways to manage nausea include ginger, fizzy drinks, lavender and sea bands
- Diet – regular meals / little and often



# Diarrhoea

- Chemotherapy can cause a change in your bowel habit
- Diarrhoea can be controlled by diet or medication
- It is advisable to drink plenty of fluids
- Eat small, frequent meals



**IF FREQUENT DIARRHOEA OF  
FOUR EPISODES IN A 24 HR  
PERIOD CONTACT 01934  
881080 OR OUT OF HOURS  
0117 3422011/6**



# Constipation

- Chemotherapy can cause a change in your bowel habit
- It is advisable to drink plenty of fluids
- Try to have a high fibre diet e.g. plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables, cereals e.g. weetabix, shredded wheat
- Try natural remedies e.g. syrup of figs, prunes, prune juice
- Try taking gentle exercise



**IF YOUR NORMAL BOWEL  
HABIT CHANGES AND  
CONSTIPATION PERSISTS  
CONTACT 24HR 01934  
881080 OR OUT OF HOURS  
0117 3422011/6**

# Loss of Appetite

- Chemotherapy can affect your appetite.
- Try to eat little and often.
- Try and eat a well balanced diet during your treatment.
- If you are having problems ask your nurse who can refer you to the Macmillan dietician.



# Taste Changes

- Chemotherapy can effect your taste.
- You may find you have a metallic taste in your mouth or food tastes like cardboard.
- This is usually temporary.
- You may desire foods you wouldn't normally go for or you may go off your favourite foods e.g. tea, coffee, chocolate.



# Sore Mouth

- Clean your teeth regularly at least twice a day.
- Change to a soft toothbrush.
- If your mouth becomes sore try to avoid food or drink that may affect your sore mouth.
- You may be prescribed a mouthwash to use at home



**IF SORENESS FAILS TO CLEAR UP QUICKLY  
OR YOU HAVE PROBLEMS EATING AND  
DRINKING NORMALLY PLEASE CONTACT  
01934 881080 OR OUT OF HOURS 0117  
3422011/6**

# Fatigue

- Maintain gentle exercise throughout treatment.
- 75% of people with cancer may feel fatigued.
- It affects everyone differently, it can be very mild to very disruptive.
- Try to cut down on doing things that are not essential and ask family and friends to help.





# Skin and Nail Changes

- Some drugs can affect your skin.
- Your skin may become dry, itchy and spotty.
- Your skin will be sensitive to sunlight, so wear a high factor sun cream (at least SPF 30).
- Nails can become brittle, flaky and/or discoloured.



# Fertility & Contraception

## Women

- Your periods may stop or become irregular
- Chemotherapy can cause reduced libido and infertility

## Men

- Chemotherapy can cause reduced libido and infertility

## Men & Women

- Good contraception – use condoms during intercourse to minimise risk of pregnancy and passing elements of chemo in bodily fluids



# Who Do I Contact If I Am Unwell?

**ACUTE ONCOLOGY SERVICE CONTACT**  
**01934 881080**

**OUT OF HOURS CONTACT 0117 342 2011/6**

**Please phone as soon as you feel unwell even if you have an appointment on the same day, do not delay or just turn up without an appointment.**

A nurse will answer the phone and ask a series of questions so they can triage and advise you appropriately.



# Can I Bring Anyone With Me?

- During the COVID pandemic only patients are allowed into the hospital. No visitors can stay with you on the unit.
- You can bring sandwiches, snacks and soft drinks with you.
- It is a good idea to bring something to do whilst your having treatment.



# Your chemotherapy record book

- Please use your chemotherapy record book to monitor your side effects and as a guide when to phone for advice
- Your nurse will help fill in your blood results and chemotherapy treatment



# Chemotherapy Assessment Clinic

- You will be assessed by your consultant prior to each treatment. This will either be face to face in the Quantock outpatient department or by telephone.
- Your weight will be checked and bloods will be taken prior to each treatment.
- All patients will be assessed for COVID symptoms before entering the department



# MACMILLAN. CANCER SUPPORT

The Macmillan Centre is available to access for support & information.



A Macmillan support worker is assigned to all new patients for help and support.







**You will also be given a New Patient pack to take away with you, containing further reading material, a thermometer, your Cancer Record book and an emergency contact card.**

