

Going home after Chemotherapy

An information guide



Going home after Chemotherapy

Information for haematology patients

Going home between treatments or when you have completed treatment can be a difficult time. Although you will be very focused on getting home, this can be a time when you may feel vulnerable and a little isolated. The purpose of this leaflet is to give you some guidance so that you can enjoy your time at home.

It is safe to be at home but it is important to contact us if you become unwell or have concerns.

Urgent contact number

F11 - 24 hour haematology hotline on **0161 656 1166**.

Risk of infection

You will be more at risk of getting infections after chemotherapy treatment.

If you feel unwell or you have a temperature of 37.5° C or above please contact the above number for advice. Do not leave a message – make sure that you speak to someone

Call us immediately - any delay could be harmful.

Other symptoms to tell us about are shivers/shakes, severe sweating, coughs, colds, diarrhoea, shortness of breath or rashes. If you have a central line (central venous catheter) or PICC line (peripherally inserted central catheter), please tell us immediately about any redness, swelling, oozing or pain around the site of the line.

Falls

As many of both the haematology conditions and subsequent treatments can affect your blood counts and make you more susceptible to bleeding, if you have a fall and bang your head you must seek medical attention immediately even if you feel ok.

Returning home - what you can expect

It is normal to feel quite tired and lethargic and you may notice that you feel quite low in mood. It often takes time to adjust to being back at home when you have been in hospital. If you have spent a lot of time on your own you may feel overwhelmed when surrounded by family and friends again. Don't be afraid to take a little time out.

Preventing infection

To try to reduce the risk of infection it is advisable to avoid crowded places, people with coughs, colds or viruses and busy public transport, at least for the first few days or weeks after you go home.

If someone at home has an infection, don't worry but try to minimise direct contact and pay particular attention to hand washing. If you come into contact with anyone with chicken pox, let us know.

Vaccines

If you need immunisation please ask your hospital doctor or nurse for advice as some vaccines, known as live vaccines, are not recommended. You can have inactivated vaccines, so travelling abroad is still an option. The flu vaccine is usually recommended, but ask your hospital doctor or nurse for advice.

Eating and drinking

If you have been on a 'neutropenic' or 'clean' diet, there is no need for you to continue on this when you are at home unless you have been told to do so by your haematology team.

However, it is sensible to take precautions, such as ensuring all food is within the 'use by' date and keeping to good hygiene practice when preparing food.

This includes washing your hands before preparing food and after touching raw meat, and making sure knives and chopping boards are cleaned thoroughly. You can go out for meals and have take-away food but go to places with a good reputation. It is generally better to choose freshly cooked food.

You may find your appetite is quite small but it is important to try to eat little and often. Aim to drink about 2-3 litres a day. Do not eat low calorie or low fat food, unless your doctor or dietitian advises you to do so.

Skin Care

Following chemotherapy, your skin may be more sensitive especially to sunlight. It is important to use high factor sun creams and wear protective clothing, including a hat.

Personal Relationships and Sexuality

When you go home there is no reason why you cannot resume a sex life. Following treatment you may feel less like having sex for a while. Anxiety and lethargy can add to this. Other effects of treatment such as weight loss and hair loss may change the way you feel about yourself and your personal relationships. Some people are afraid of close contact due to a risk of infection but this should not be a problem. However, it is advisable to use a condom while your blood counts are low, during chemotherapy and for the first few months following treatment.

Dentist

Once your blood counts are normal, it should be fine to have routine check-ups. Your haematology team will be able to advise when this is safe.

Your dentist may wish to contact your haematology team to discuss whether it is all right for you to have any dental treatment. If you are unsure of anything please contact us for advice.

Returning to work

When you are ready to go back to work will depend on the job you do, how you are feeling and the type of treatment you have had.

Some people find that it takes several months before they feel ready to return. Going back to work on a part time basis can be helpful at first.

Please feel free to discuss this with your specialist nurse or another member of the team looking after you.

Relax!

As long as you follow the guidance, it is safe to be at home, so try to relax and enjoy not being in hospital. Try to eat well, do some gentle exercise and rest when you need to.

Do not feel as though you have to tackle problems by yourself now that you are at home. You can contact your specialist nurse or unit for help at any time in the future.

If you have financial or practical problems they can also put you in touch with people who can advise you.

Useful numbers

F11 Day case reception: 0161 778 5527/5515

Monday & Friday: 8am – 6pm

Tuesday & Thursday: 8am – 5pm

Wednesday: 8am – 4pm

F11 Day case nurses station: 0161 778 5584/5586

Monday – Friday: 8am – 8pm

F11 Inpatient nurses station: 0161 778 5514/5519

Seven days a week: 24 Hours a day

Macmillan Haematology Clinical Nurse Specialist Team Office:

Telephone: 0161 778 5297

Monday – Friday: 8am – 6pm

Your consultant is

Your hospital no. is

Notes

If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

اگر انگریزی آپ کی پہلی زبان نہیں ہے اور آپ کو مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو ، براہ کرم ترجمانی اور ترجمہ خدمت سے رابطہ کریں

Dacă engleza nu este prima ta limbă și ai nevoie de ajutor, te rugăm să contactezi Serviciul de interpretare și traducere

ইংরাজী যদি আপনার প্রথম ভাষা না হয় এবং আপনার সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন হয় তবে অনুগ্রহ করে দোভাষী এবং অনুবাদ পরিষেবাটিতে যোগাযোগ করুন

إذا لم تكن الإنجليزية هي لغتك الأولى وتحتاج إلى مساعدة ، فيرجى الاتصال بخدمة الترجمة الشفوية والتحريرية

☎ : 0161 627 8770

@ : interpretation@pat.nhs.uk

To improve our care environment for Patients, Visitors and Staff, **Northern Care Alliance NHS Group** is Smoke Free including buildings, grounds & car parks.

For advice on stopping smoking contact the Specialist Stop Smoking Service on 01706 517 522

For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897

For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service

The Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA) is one of the largest NHS organisations in the country, employing 17,000 staff and providing a range of hospital and community healthcare services to around 1 million people across Salford, Oldham, Bury, Rochdale and surrounding areas. Our Care Organisations are responsible for providing our services, delivering safe, high quality and reliable care to the local communities they serve.

The NCA brings together Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust and the hospitals and community services of The Royal Oldham Hospital, Fairfield General Hospital in Bury, and Rochdale Infirmary (currently part of The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust).

 www.facebook.com/NorthernCareAllianceNHSGroup

 www.linkedin.com/company/northern-care-alliance-nhs-group

 Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA) @NCAlliance_NHS

Date of publication: January 2009

Date of review: August 2021

Date of next review: October 2023

Ref: PI(M)525

© The Northern Care Alliance NHS Group



www.pat.nhs.uk

www.northerncarealliance.nhs.uk