

# **PATIENT ORIENTATION PACKAGE**

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## NORTHERN CANCER INSTITUTE

The Northern Cancer Institute is a group of cancer treatment units where holistic care is given in an environment that is designed to be as pleasant and as comfortable as possible.

The philosophy of the NCI is to administer chemotherapy with minimal disruption to your normal routine.

In addition to receiving chemotherapy, you are monitored closely to ensure maximum health and well being. Our clinical staff provide education, support and advice to each individual and their carers.

The Northern Cancer Institute is open at North Shore Private Hospital **Monday to Friday from 7am-6pm and at Frenchs Forest Monday to Friday 9am-5pm**. During these hours we are available to answer any questions you may have about your treatment.

*Light snacks and refreshments are provided during the day. Portable DVD players and DVDs can be provided upon request. Alternatively you can bring your laptop or reading to the clinic. A family member or a friend is more than welcome to accompany you during your treatment*

We trust you will be happy with our quality service, however if you are unhappy with any aspect of the care you receive from this clinic, we are keen to know about it. Please feel free to speak to Polly Crowden or your oncologist if there are any issues you would like to discuss.

## STAFF

Our team of highly trained nursing staff work under the supervising care of the Oncologist who referred you to the NCI for chemotherapy.

### **Oncologists at the Northern Cancer Institute**

Dr David Bell  
Dr Nick Pavlakis  
Dr Helen Wheeler  
Dr Sally Baron-Hay

Dr Alex Guminski

## **The Clinic Staff at Northern Cancer Institute**

Nurse Manager: Polly Crowden

Inpatient Oncology Case Manager: Marina Kastelan

## **APPOINTMENTS**

It is important that you see your Oncologist at regular intervals, and you will need to make appointments through the Northern Specialist Centre, Frenchs Forest Clinic or contact your Oncologist's secretary directly.

### **Secretaries:**

Dr. Bell 9926 7184

Dr Nick Pavlakis 9926 5020

Dr Wheeler 9926 7184

Dr Baron-Hay 9926 7184

Dr Alex Guminski 9926 5020

Appointments are also required in order to undergo tests and to attend the NCI for your chemotherapy. Please speak to the administration staff to organise these.

*Please remember to alert the front reception staff at NCI when you arrive and depart from the clinic.*

## **THE CLINIC**

Meals: Morning tea, Lunch and Afternoon tea is provided by the NCI if you are present at the times they are distributed. If you have special dietary needs please alert the General Services Officer on duty that day.

Mobile Phones: We ask that you please turn your phone off or put it on silent for the comfort of fellow patients who may be resting during their treatment.

## **EMERGENCIES**

In the event of an emergency occurring outside the normal opening hours of the Northern Cancer Institute, you should contact your *General Practitioner* or attend the **nearest Accident and Emergency department to you.**

## **PARKING**

When paying for parking (in the main foyer of Royal North Shore Hospital) show your Northern Cancer Institute appointment card and this will enable you to receive a subsidised parking rate of **\$5 per visit** to the hospital campus.

Express Parking is located at the back of the hospital and is available at the starting cost of \$5 and then increased by \$2.50 every following hour.

**Valet parking** is also available at the flat rate of \$25

*Please note our subsidised \$5 all day parking rate DOES NOT apply to the express parking section of the hospital.*

Ample free parking available at the Frenchs Forest clinic.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

The diagnosis of cancer has probably left you feeling frightened, confused and maybe angry. None of these feelings are unusual; they are shared by many people at some point.

There is a large range of information and support services available—there are many professionals on hand to help you in managing the effects of your medical condition, your treatment, and the associated emotional impact. Talk to our staff. We can assist you in choosing the most appropriate services.

### Cansupport

Cansupport is a programme of care, support and education for people with cancer, their families and carers. Enquiries about specific cancer workshops can be directed to the Cansupport co-ordinator, Amanda O'Reilly, phone 9926 7246.

Some of the services and groups available through Cansupport include:

- Cansupport information/support meetings
- The "Look Good ... Feel Better" Program with regular workshops
- The monthly prostate Cancer Group
- The monthly women with metastatic breast cancer group
- Resources Centre
- Weekly Relaxation/Meditation sessions
- Educational meetings

**Cansupport** also has volunteer visitors who are carefully selected and trained in the special skills of listening and giving support to help you through a difficult time... a time they have also been through. These volunteers are available to visit you in hospital, at home and also provide telephone support.

- **Other support services**

- Dieticians
- Occupational therapy
- Community Nursing services with staff specialising in oncology
- Palliative Care/Pain Management
- Reflexology
- Translating and interpreting
- Local accommodation options can be given for people outside of the Sydney metropolitan area

The **Sydney Neuro-Oncology Group** is an educational support group. The organisation is a non-profit organisation that aims to research, educate and follow up the progress of all of their brain tumour patients. Their website is [www.snog.org.au](http://www.snog.org.au).

## THE SIDE EFFECTS OF CHEMOTHERAPY

There is usually no pain associated with chemotherapy - just the initial insertion of the intravenous line.

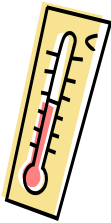
There are many stories of the side effects of chemotherapy within the community from well meaning (though often ill informed people). Each person responds differently to chemotherapy and to individual treatments. You will be given a drug information sheet about each individual chemotherapy drug you receive, and this will explain the possible side effects.

***Remember that the side effects listed are only the worst case scenario - they may not necessarily happen to you.***

Some of the common side effects that may be experienced include tiredness, nausea and loss of appetite -but there are many drugs available today that are given to alleviate nausea. (See page 8).



Another complication may include **anaemia**, and the side effects you may experience in relation to this include shortness of breath on any mild exertion, palpitations and lethargy requiring you to rest often. In the event that you develop anaemia, the nursing staff will discuss this problem with your oncologist, and you will be offered a blood transfusion (which is offered here at the NCI).



Chemotherapy can lower your white blood cell count (the cells that fight infection). This may happen approximately 10 days after each treatment. If you have a temperature greater than 38 degrees C, twice in a 6 hour period, please *contact your General Practitioner, or attend the Accident & Emergency Department* of Royal North Shore Hospital, or the hospital nearest to you.

*A high temperature is often the first indication of an infection other signs include runny nose, chills, aching bones and not feeling quite right*

## NAUSEA AND VOMITING

Nausea and vomiting can be caused by several factors:

- Chemotherapy
- Radiotherapy
- Anxiety or emotional upset
- The disease process

Prolonged nausea and vomiting may result in weight loss that can slow down your recovery. **Nausea is much easier to prevent than treat**, so please take the anti-nausea drugs you have been given, as instructed. Anti-nausea drugs are given before each chemotherapy treatment and can be continued for as long as necessary - This may vary from one day to several days. Remember - everyone is an individual and responds differently to the treatment.

Specific anti-nausea drugs will be given for you to take. There are several alternatives that can be offered:



Tropisetron - **Navoban** 5 mg capsule

Given intravenously on the day of your chemotherapy; then take one capsule daily, starting the day after chemotherapy, for 2 days.

Ondansetron -**Zofran** 8 mg tablet

Given intravenously on the day of your chemotherapy; then take one capsule twice a day, starting the night of chemotherapy, for a total of 4 doses.

Granisetron - **Kytril** 2mg tablet

Given intravenously on the day of your chemotherapy; then take one tablet daily, starting the day after your chemotherapy for 2 days.

*(Please Note: Navoban, Zofran and Kytril can cause constipation, heartburn and headaches if taken for several days).*

Metoclopramide - **Maxalon** (Pramin) 10 mg tablet.

Take 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hours if you are nauseated. You may find it helpful to take one tablet half an hour before meals if you are nauseated.

Prochlorperazine - **Stemetil** 5 mg tablet.

Take 1-2 tablets every 6-8 hours if you are nauseated. You may find it helpful to take one tablet half an hour before meals if you are nauseated.

Prochlorperazine - **Stemetil suppository** 25 mg

Insert 1 rectally every 6-8 hours. These are excellent if vomiting is an ongoing problem.

Aprepitant - **Emend tripack**: 125mg capsule, 2 x 80mg capsules

Take 125mg capsule one hour prior to chemotherapy; then take one 80mg capsule daily, starting the day after chemotherapy, for 2 days.

**Dexamethasone 4mg**

Given intravenously on the day of your chemotherapy. Take one tablet morning and midday, with food, for 2 days following chemotherapy (**only if instructed to do so**).

Please note that differing anti-nausea drugs can be taken at the same time.

Some people have mild continuous nausea despite taking anti-nausea drugs. If this occurs then try:

- **Pyridoxine 100 mg** (Vitamin B6), one tablet, twice per day.
- **Ginger capsules**, one capsule, 3 times a day may also be helpful.

**Make meals work for you...**

As a cancer patient good nutrition is VERY IMPORTANT, as your dietary needs are greater at this time. Choosing a variety of foods from each of the five food groups will ensure you have a well balanced diet, in order to provide your body with all the essential nutrients it needs. This will help you cope mentally and physically with the cancer and any treatment side-effects, allowing you the best possible response to your treatment.

***Some useful hints to prevent/alleviate nausea***

- Alleviate anxiety by using relaxation tapes, music during times of nausea, and when you are receiving your chemotherapy.
- Avoid stress while you eat - make meals an enjoyable time.
- Don't have a large meal immediately before or after chemotherapy treatment.
- Avoid excess coffee and tea as these may stimulate your stomach to feel more unsettled.
- Avoid foods with strong smells (e.g. cheeses, red meat, and marinated food).

- Eat small meals regularly (e.g. six small meals instead of three large ones).
- Eat your main meal at the time of the day when you feel your best.
- Eat savoury rather than sweet foods



- Fish and seafood, meats, eggs and tofu should be well cooked and not eaten raw.
- Cook food before nausea occurs, or alternatively, have someone else prepare your meals.
- Avoid greasy, fatty or fried food.



- Plain (rather than spicy) foods may be better tolerated.
- Take sips of fluid often, this is important to keep you well hydrated.
- Try to avoid drinking large volumes of fluids with meals



*You should drink 2-3 litres of fluid a day for 2-3 days immediately following chemotherapy.*

*If persistent nausea and vomiting is a problem please notify NCI staff*

## BOWEL PROBLEMS

### Constipation

The anti-nausea drugs, Navoban, Zofran and Kytril, and some anti-cancer drugs can cause constipation.

It is recommended that you commence an aperient (laxative) the day your chemotherapy starts. You should continue taking the aperient

until you have finished your course of anti-nausea drugs and your normal bowel habits have been re-established.

If constipation persists, contact your GP or the NCI. No more than 2 days should pass without a bowel motion.

Some suggestions to prevent or relieve constipation include:

- Drink plenty of fluids



- Include high fibre foods in your diet (e.g. bran, raw fruits & vegetables, whole grain breads & nuts)



- Maintain a normal level of activity or exercise, if possible

Faecal softeners or other aperients will almost always be required. If you have a history of constipation, start taking an aperient the night before chemotherapy

**Coloxyl with Senna** - Take 1-2 tablets at night, or increased to 3 times a day if necessary.

**Coloxyl 120 mg** - Take 1-2 tablets at night, or increased to 3 times a day if necessary.

**Movicol sachets** - Mix 1 sachet in 120 mls of water. A maximum of 8 sachets per day can be taken.

**If, despite the above, your bowels still have not opened in 3 days and you have increased your aperient usage and fluid intake, try one glycerine and one Durolox suppository inserted in the rectum.**

If this still does not work, contact your GP.

## DIARRHOEA



Diarrhoea can be caused by some chemotherapy drugs, or by anxiety. If diarrhoea continues for more than 24 hours or if you are experiencing pain or cramping, call your local doctor as it may be necessary to take anti-diarrhoea drugs.

**Some ways you may be able to control diarrhoea include:**

- Drink small amounts frequently to replace fluids you have lost.
- Drink clear fluids such as weak apple juice, water, weak tea or clear broth.
- The fluids should be taken at room temperature or warmed.
- Let carbonated drinks lose their fizz before you drink them.
- Eat smaller amounts of food but eat more frequently.
- Try plain foods instead of spicy or fried foods.
- Eat potassium rich foods and beverages like bananas, potatoes and sports drinks
- Alcohol, fruit juices and strong tea or coffee may stimulate the bowel so these should be avoided where possible.

*If you have severe pain / cramping in your bowels or notice blood or black contact the NCI staff*

**Imodium** - Take 2 capsules initially, then take 1 capsule after each loose bowel motion, but do not exceed 8 capsules in any 24hr period. If diarrhoea continues, contact your doctor.

**Lomotil** - Take 1 tablet after each loose bowel motion.

If diarrhoea continues, contact your GP.

## MOUTH CARE

Some chemotherapy drugs can cause a sore and ulcerated mouth and throat. To prevent infections occurring and maintain a healthy mouth environment, it is important to keep your mouth clean during your treatment.

### Suggestions to prevent a sore mouth



- Use a soft, small headed toothbrush which must be rinsed well after every use.
- Gently brush your teeth after each meal using circular strokes.
- Gently floss teeth daily.
- Use a non alcohol mouthwash at least 4 times a day.

*NCI recommend sodium bicarbonate mouthwash (Dissolve 1 teaspoon of sodium bicarbonate in a glass of warm water. Rinse your mouth well, and then spit out. Use after each meal and before going to bed).*

- Avoid commercial mouthwashes that contain alcohol, as they will dry and irritate your gums.
- If you have dentures, remove and clean them after each meal. Rinse your mouth with mouthwash when your dentures are removed.

### Treatment for a sore mouth, ulcers or infections

Check your mouth every time you do your mouth care. If you develop a sore mouth or a white coating on your tongue, use a **Sodium bicarbonate**, **Biotene**, or **Amosan** mouthwash every 2-4 hours.

**You must also use:**

- *Nilstat antifungal drops*. Place 1ml on your tongue, hold in your mouth for as long as possible, then swallow. These can be purchased from your local pharmacy and do not require a prescription.
- *Fungilin lozenges or Fluconazole tablets* can also be used. Both require a prescription from your GP.

**You should also:**

- Use Biotene toothpaste if regular toothpaste irritates your gums.
- Drink plenty of fluids.



- Suck on ice and ice blocks.
- Eat soft, bland moist foods.
- Eat food cold or at room temperature
- Chew sugarless chewing gum or suck sugarless sweets, because they stimulate the flow of saliva and will destroy unpleasant tastes in your mouth
- Use lip balm on your lips if they become dry.

**Avoid**

- Mouthwashes containing alcohol.
- Spicy and salty foods.
- Acidic foods (e.g. Grapefruit, oranges, lemons and tomatoes).
- Rough, coarse, sharp or dry foods.
- Hot food.

**If you have mouth pain**

- **Xylocaine viscous fluid** 5 mls - hold in mouth for as long as possible, then swallow. Avoid eating hot foods after this.
- For an individual ulcer, use **Orabase gel** or **Xylocaine 2% jelly**.

*Consult your GP or Oncology nurse if the infection or ulcers do not get better, or if the pain interferes with your ability to eat and drink.*

## Your Lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle assists with recovery and aids in coping with the illness and the side-effects of your treatment.

### Ensure you:

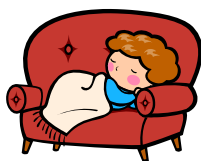
- Have a good diet
- Get adequate rest and relaxation



- Get as much regular exercise as is possible
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Plan clearly defined goals so you can focus your attention and energies in achieving those goals.

This will help take your mind off your illness and ensure you maintain your overall quality of life.

## Fatigue



Many people with cancer say that fatigue is the symptom that has the most impact on them – more than half of all patients receiving chemotherapy report feeling fatigue at some time. It is unclear why fatigue is increased during chemotherapy, but it is believed that there is an increase in the levels of chemicals (cytokines) that cells use to communicate – there seems to be some link between these cytokines and fatigue.

If you are anaemic, the best treatment for fatigue is one that increases your haemoglobin thus, a blood transfusion may benefit.

Other remedies which may combat these feelings of fatigue may include

- Exercise which can increase your energy levels and help you to feel better about yourself and your condition. Walking for 15 minutes each day is all it takes.
- Refrain from caffeine or large amounts of fluids before going to bed.
- Encourage sleep promotion – warm, relaxed, dark room to encourage sleep. Even a warm milk before bed may help.
- Stay in a routine – get out of bed at the same time each day. Try to continue with some activity throughout your day. If needed, you can have a lay down in the afternoon for 40 minutes to 1 hour, but always get up and active again.
- Ensure you are free from pain.

## SEXUALITY



Chemotherapy and its associated side effects may impinge upon / affect your sexuality. Therefore, whilst undergoing chemotherapy please do not hesitate to discuss any concerns you may have with your nurse or oncologist.

Following chemotherapy administration, all of your body fluids are contaminated with chemotherapy for up to 7 days. Excretion times and excretion routes of each drug varies.

*If you and your partner are sexually active condoms and birth control should be used through each chemotherapy course*

### **TAKING PRECAUTIONS WITH CHEMOTHERAPY**

**Direct or indirect exposure to chemotherapeutic drugs through urine, bowel motions, vomit, semen, and vaginal fluid could cause damage to a person not having chemotherapy.**

### **Remember to:**

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-Wear disposable gloves when handling body fluid

- Wear a condom
- Double flush the toilet with the lid down
- Wash contaminated clothes in a hot soapy wash

*Don't be afraid to express your concerns and feelings associated with chemotherapy with your family and staff at NCI.*

## ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES AND MEDICATION

Please feel free to discuss with your oncologist or the clinic nursing staff, any other therapies or alternative medication you may wish to pursue while you are receiving chemotherapy, as these can occasionally interfere with your treatment.

## FOLLOW-UP BLOOD TESTS



Chemotherapy drugs are designed to kill cancer cells; however some normal cells are also damaged in the process. You will be carefully monitored by **regular** blood tests whilst you are receiving chemotherapy. We will provide you with the necessary blood request form to take to your local pathology collection centre.

**PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE A BLOOD TEST ONE DAY BEFORE EACH CHEMOTHERAPY TREATMENT, UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED.**

### Notes

