

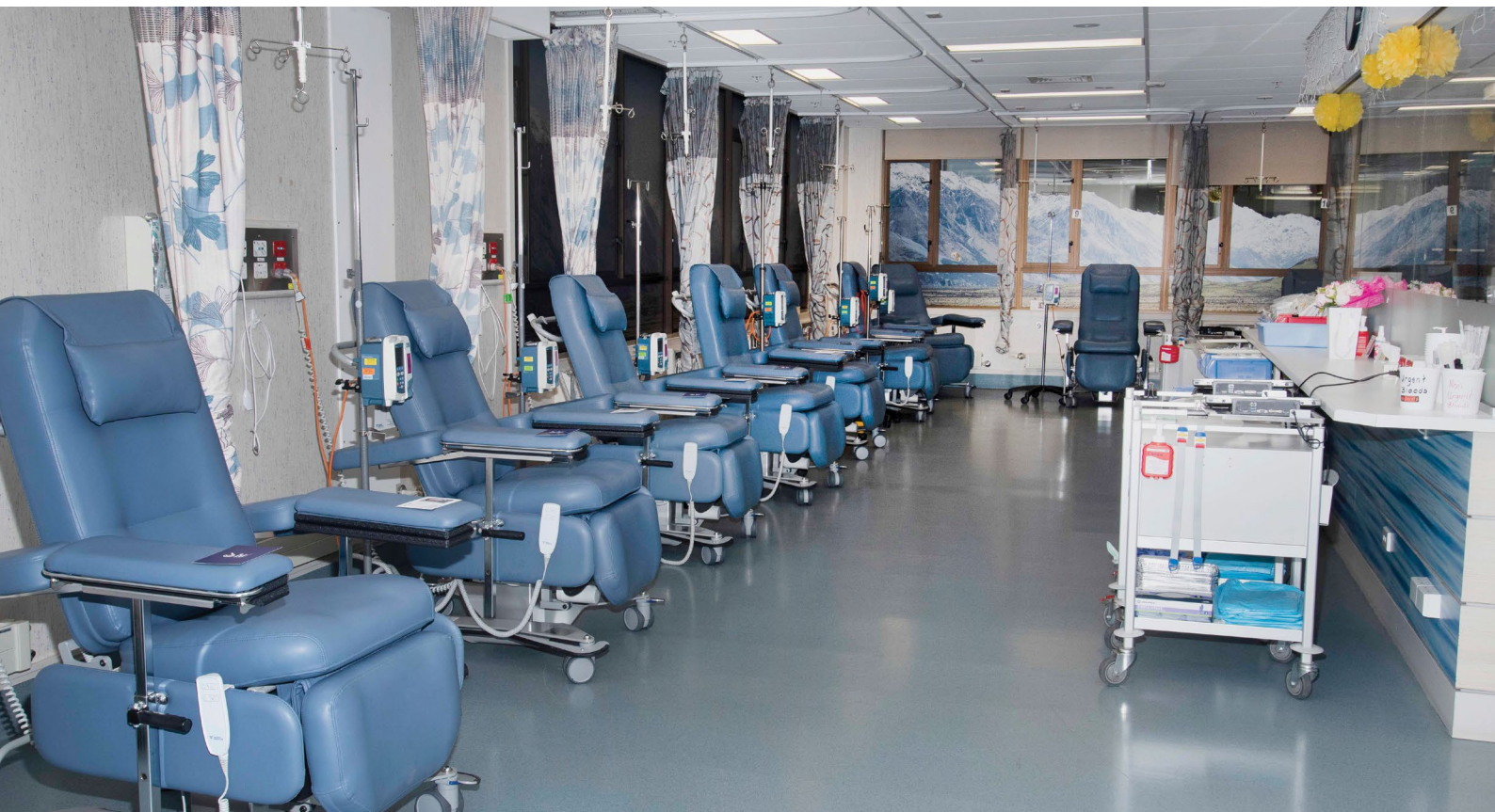
Treatment Booklet

Canterbury Regional Cancer and Haematology Service

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha



My Medical Oncologist or Nurse Practitioner is:

My treatment plan is:

My NHI is:

Opening hours

Monday – Friday, 8am – 5pm
Phone: (03) 364 0020

After hours

Contact (03) 364 0020 to talk to a nurse
24 hours a day

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Welcome to the Medical Oncology Service

The Canterbury Regional Cancer and Haematology Service (CRCHS) provides a wide range of treatments including chemotherapy, radiation therapy, biological therapy, immune checkpoint inhibitors and hormone therapy.

The purpose of this information booklet is to introduce you to your treatment, as well as describe the process you will most likely follow during your visits to the Oncology Department. The Oncology Department is part of the CRCHS.

For additional information you may wish to refer to our website: www.cdhb.health.nz search for cancer/haematology.

If you would like more specific information related to your diagnosis and type of cancer please discuss this with your Oncology team.

What is Medical Oncology?

Medical Oncology is a specialised field of medicine that focuses on the use of drugs to treat cancer. The aim of treatment is to kill cancer cells, whilst doing the least possible damage to normal cells.

Drug therapy may be given alone (either before or after surgery) or combined with hormones, radiation treatment or biological therapies. Different combinations of treatment are used for different types of cancer.

Who is involved in my care during my treatment?

You will be under the care of an Oncologist, a doctor who is a cancer specialist, or a Nurse Practitioner, a nurse with advanced training who specialises in cancer. Both are trained in the use of chemotherapy. The Medical Oncologist or Nurse Practitioner assesses your cancer and prescribes the appropriate treatment. They will see you during your treatment to monitor your progress. You will also be seen by a Registrar, a qualified doctor who works as part of the team in providing your care.

During your treatment, you will also meet Oncology Nurses, who will support you, administer the treatment and, if needed, help you with managing any side effects.

All members of staff work together as a team to ensure you receive the best care possible. Therefore you may be reviewed by the oncologist, registrar or nurse when you attend appointments.

The Canterbury Regional Cancer and Haematology Service is involved in education and training of medical, nursing and radiation therapy students. All students are under the supervision of a qualified doctor, nurse or radiation therapist. Students will always introduce themselves to you and you will be asked in advance if you allow them to be involved with your care. You have the right to refuse without fear of recrimination or penalty.

Support services are available to you through your treatment and are discussed later.

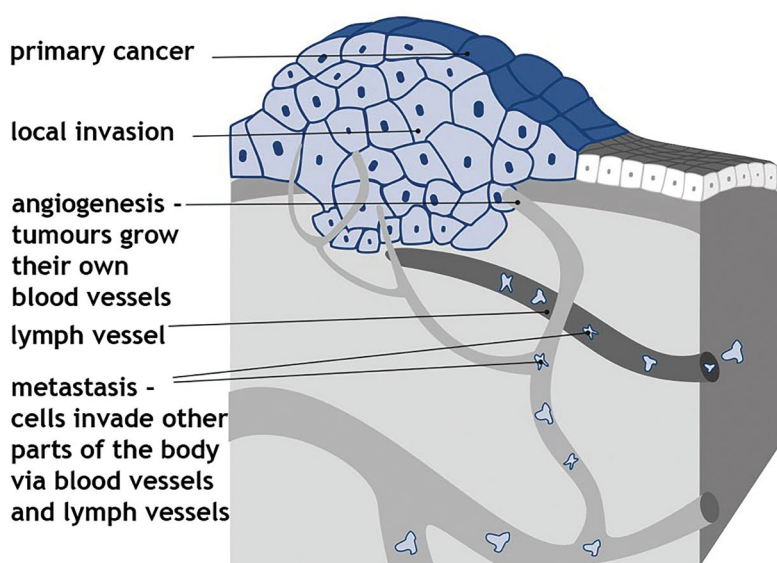
It is important that you keep in touch with your general practice team during your treatment so they can continue to monitor your other medical conditions and prescribe medications for these as necessary. Some medications including morphine, codeine and sleeping tablets are best managed by just one prescriber. The best prescriber to do this will almost always be a member of your general practice team. Even if these medications are started in the oncology service we will advise your community prescriber to take over the prescribing of these medications.

What is cancer and how does drug therapy affect cancer cells?

Cancer is the uncontrolled growth of any cell in the body which have had their genetic makeup damaged. Cancer cells replace normal tissue and use up the nutrients and physical space required by healthy cells, forming a lump called a tumour. They may invade nearby or more distant parts of the body. For example, you may have been diagnosed with a lump in your breast (primary tumour) then later on find it has spread to your bone (secondary or metastatic tumour).

Traditional chemotherapy drugs target cancer cells by interfering with their ability to grow. It travels through your blood stream and kills cancer cells in different parts of your body. Healthy cells may also be affected. They tend to be better at repairing the damage caused and are able to recover better. Everyone is unique so the type of treatment you are given will depend on the type of cancer you have and your general health.

How Cancer Spreads:



What are biological drugs and immune checkpoint inhibitors?

Newer drugs which are called targeted therapy or biotherapy are also used to treat cancer. These can be used alone or in combination with the traditional chemotherapy drugs described above.

They work by targeting particular parts of cancer cells or specific pathways involved in cancer growth. The drugs disrupt the cancer cell or pathway and block the processes which are driving cancer growth. Some work by blocking (inhibiting) specific proteins produced by the cancer which then allow our immune system to kill the cancer cells.

They are only suitable for use with certain types of cancers. Your Medical Oncologist or Nurse Practitioner will be able to discuss with you.

By using these newer types of treatments the side effects experienced can be different to side effects of chemotherapy. You will be given specific written information about each drug and its side effects.

If I decide to have treatment, what happens next?

You do not have to decide to have treatment at your first visit with the Oncology Specialist. You may wish to have more time to consider your options. It can be useful to write down any questions you have and bring them to any of your appointments.

Once you have made a decision about undertaking treatment with the Oncology team, you will receive your next appointments. An appointment will be made with a nurse to have education on the details of your treatment. Additional appointments will be sent to you for subsequent treatment and clinic visits.

You may be given medications to help with any side effects of your treatment. These may change during your treatment, so it is helpful to bring your medications with you (or a list) for each visit. If you want to take any new medications (including complementary or over the counter medicines) while having treatment, ask the oncology team about these before you begin taking them. Some medicines do not mix well with other medicines.

Patient education video

This video has been developed to provide information about what to expect when you are starting drug therapy to treat cancer.

Please check out the CDHB website www.cdhb.health.nz and search for Medical Oncology. You may also view it on one of our portable devices while you are in the waiting room.

How is treatment given?

Most people have their treatment as an outpatient. Treatment administration time can vary from less than an hour to all day. Some people may need to stay a few nights in hospital. Treatments are most commonly given by injection or infusion into a vein, or occasionally as tablets.

Your particular treatment will be discussed with you by the oncology team. You will also receive written information about the drugs you will receive.

Oral treatments

Some treatments are given as tablets which can be taken at home. It is very important you take your tablets when and how your oncology team instructs. Make sure you understand the side effects and who to contact if you have problems. Even though you're having this treatment at home, remember it is no different from intravenous treatment in the way it works and its possible side effects.

Intravenous (IV) treatments

There are a number of different devices which can be used to deliver the treatment. The best option for you will be discussed by the oncology team. You will be given written information once the device has been decided.

Types of devices include:

Cannula

A cannula is a small tube. This is put into a vein in your arm. It is put in by the oncology nurse on the day of treatment. The cannula is removed after each treatment.



Central Venous Access Devices – CVAD

For repeated or longer infusions or when there is difficulty finding a suitable vein you may require a central venous access device (CVAD). CVAD's are put in under a general or local anaesthetic.

There are different types of CVAD's and the options will be discussed with you regarding which device is most suitable to you.

1. Peripherally inserted central catheter – PICC

A PICC is inserted into a vein through the skin in the upper part of the arm and threaded to sit just above the heart.



2. Centrally inserted chest catheter – CICC

The CICC is a tunnelled catheter inserted under the skin on the left or right side of the chest, tunnelled to one of the large neck veins (internal jugular vein) and threaded to sit just above the heart. A cuff (also known as dacron cuff) sits internally on the catheter to secure the line. This takes 2-3 weeks for it to adhere to the internal skin layers, so you do need to be careful not to pull on the catheter. The catheter can be used immediately once inserted.



3. Portacath (an implantable port)

The portacath is inserted under local or general anaesthetic via an incision to the chest wall. The catheter tip of the portacath is then threaded to sit just above the heart. Once in place, you can feel and see the port as a small bump underneath the skin. Nothing shows on the outside of your body. To use the portacath, a needle is passed through your skin into the port. The skin over the port can be numbed with an anaesthetic cream first.



How long will my treatment last?

Your treatment could last several weeks or several months. Treatment is anywhere from one to four weeks apart. Spacing your treatment in this way gives your body a chance to recover from any side effects.

What will happen on the first day of my treatment?

On the first day of your treatment you will need to check in with the receptionist on the ground floor of the Oncology Service. If for any reason you cannot keep your appointment, please contact us as soon as possible by telephoning (03) 3640-020 during our business hours (listed on the front page).

The number of treatments you receive, and therefore the number of visits you will make to the Oncology Service, will depend on the type of treatment prescribed for you. Your treatment is usually given on weekdays and any changes to this will be explained.

You may experience side effects as a result of your treatment. These side effects vary depending on the drugs you will receive and the number of treatments you are having. Your oncology team will discuss these with you and provide written information before you start your treatment. Please read the information in this folder before you start treatment. If you have any questions do not hesitate to ask, we will always do our best to answer them.

What else happens while I am on treatment?

During your treatment you will be reviewed regularly in a clinic appointment. This is to assess how you are managing any side effects from treatment. At intervals through your treatment, a scan and additional blood tests may be arranged to check treatment effectiveness if appropriate to your situation. These results will be discussed at your clinic appointment. Please be aware the nursing treatment team cannot provide these results to you.

The oncology team seeing you in clinic will write a clinic letter. You do not routinely receive copies of these, but you can ask for your clinic letter(s) to be posted to you.

Please check your treatment medications before coming for your clinic visit so you can ask for repeat prescriptions if necessary.

Blood tests

Before each treatment you may require a blood test to be taken. These tests measure the different blood cells, liver and kidney function. Blood tests are important because treatment drugs can alter the levels. If your blood levels are altered your oncology team might give you a longer time between treatments or adjust treatment doses. This will be discussed with you if it needs to happen.

What treatment side effects can I expect?

Treatment affects people in different ways. Maintaining your wellness as well as managing side effects is important. Your oncology team will discuss management with you as you go through treatment and as the need arises. Most side effects are temporary. Please discuss your concerns about any of these with your oncology team.

We are always available to talk with you if you have any questions or concerns about your health condition.

Telephone (03) 3640 020 to talk to a nurse 24 hours a day.

If you feel unwell, take your temperature.

Contact the Oncology Service immediately (24 hours) if:

- **You begin to feel unwell or are unexpectedly unwell**
- **You start to feel muddled or confused**
- **Your temperature is 38°C or more**
- **Your temperature is less than 35.5°C**
- **You have uncontrolled shaking or shivering**
- **You have large and/or frequent diarrhoea/loose bowel motions**
- **You have chest heaviness/tightness or chest pain**

To take a temperature by mouth (orally)

1. Put the thermometer under your tongue, a little to one side of the centre. Close your lips tightly around it.
2. Leave it there for as long as the instructions say.
3. Remove the thermometer and read it.
4. Clean the thermometer with cool, soapy water. Rinse it off before you put it away.



Potential side effects

Lowered immune system / infection

Some treatment drugs can cause your neutrophil (white blood cells that fight infection) levels to lower (neutropenia), reducing your body's ability to fight infection. If you feel unwell it is important that you check your temperature and telephone us.

Please let the oncology team know immediately if you develop a temperature of 38°C or higher, or feeling hot, cold or shaky. Don't take medications for fever e.g. paracetamol, unless told to by your oncology team.

Chest pain

If you experience chest discomfort of any sort and/or difficulty breathing you need to call an ambulance immediately. This is a medical emergency.

Sore/Dry mouth

Treatment may affect your mouth and your ability to eat and/or drink. This can occur a few days after treatment. You may have pain, tender, red or dry mouth and notice ulcers (sores). Thrush (a white coating) is also a side effect of treatment occurring on your mouth, tongue, or sides of your mouth, lips and/or throat.

You will need to do mouth cares to keep your mouth clean and moist. This involves gentle brushing after meals/before bed with a soft toothbrush. Rinse with warm water or a salt & baking soda warm water rinse. Avoid mouth cares that contain alcohol. Ensure dentures fit well and avoid tooth picks. Eat soft foods – avoid extremely hot, cold or spicy foods.

Contact the oncology team if your mouth is painful and interfering with your ability to eat or drink

Nausea and vomiting

You may experience nausea (unpleasant, queasy feeling) and/or vomiting (throwing up). Not all people experience this, it depends on the drugs you are receiving. Drink plenty of fluids and take anti-nausea medication (anti-emetics) as instructed. Eating small frequent meals and taking ginger (ginger beer, ginger tablets and ginger nuts) can help.

If you are vomiting and unable to keep fluids down, you must contact the oncology team for advice. You could quickly become dehydrated and unwell.

Bowels

Your bowels may become more loose or constipated. It is important that you keep hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids and maintain an active lifestyle.

- Constipation: Occurs when you are not having bowel movements as often as normal. You should have a bowel movement every 1- 3 days (even if you only eat a small amount of food). Your treatment could be causing the constipation or it may be related to poor food intake or reduced exercise/activity.
To avoid constipation, eat a high fibre diet, drink warm fluids, or a laxative medication might be needed. Please contact the oncology team if your bowels have not opened for 3 days or more.

- **Diarrhoea:** Occurs when bowel movements are more frequent or watery than normal. Your treatment could be causing this. Avoid high fibre, spicy & greasy foods and drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.
If your bowel motions are either loose or watery, frequent (more than 4 times your normal number) and experiencing stomach pains you need to contact oncology immediately.
You may have been given a prescription for loperamide, take as directed. If taking more than 6-8 loperamide tablets in 24 hours you need to contact the oncology team.

Bleeding

Your treatment can cause bruising and bleeding. If you know your platelets (blood cells that help your blood clot) are low, please take extra care with your daily activities, i.e. avoiding contact sports (gentle exercise only) and taking care to avoid falls. Do not use a blade razor for shaving, dental floss on your teeth and avoid “blowing” your nose vigorously.

If you notice any bleeding at all including in phlegm, bowel motions or urine, you need to contact the oncology team.

Sensory changes

Some treatment drugs can cause changes in your nerves. You may experience numbness, tingling and loss of feeling in fingers or toes or both (peripheral neuropathy). Other sensory changes include muscle weakness, hearing changes or ringing in the ears, changes to sight, smell or taste.

If you notice sensory changes worsening and/or limiting your daily functioning you need to inform the Oncology team before your next treatment.

Listed below are some of the other side effects you may experience:

- Fatigue
- Memory loss
- Taste changes
- Loss of appetite
- Dry skin & nail changes
- Skin rashes
- Feeling emotional
- Changes in sexual intimacy
- Infertility
- Irregular periods
- Hair loss

Report any unusual symptoms

Please call your oncology team as soon as possible if you experience any new symptoms not listed as common side effects, or your symptoms are unrelieved.

Other important information you should know

Infusion reactions

Is an allergic reaction occurring during or after your treatment and may affect any part of your body. You should alert the treatment team immediately during treatment. It is possible to have a delayed reaction. Contact the oncology team immediately if you experience any change in vision, temperature increase, pain or discomfort in your back, chest or abdomen or skin rash. If you experience any difficulty once home with your breathing or feeling faint an ambulance should be called. This is a medical emergency.

Drink plenty of fluids.

This prevents dehydration which occurs when you have not had enough to drink and your body becomes dry. Nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea can contribute to this. It is okay to drink fluids other than water. You only need to drink enough to not feel thirsty.

Body fluids

May contain traces of treatment for up to 48 hours following treatment. Any body fluids (i.e. vomit) or soiled linen should be handled with a 'no touch' technique or disposable gloves if you have them. Any soiled clothing should be put through a hot wash on its own in the washing machine. You should flush the toilet using a full flush with the lid down.

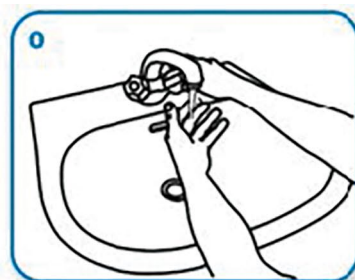
Sun protection

Treatment may increase the risk of sunburn and skin damage by the sun. Avoid exposure to the sun where possible by covering up and wearing high factor sunscreen (SPF 30+ UVA & UVB sunscreen) at all times. Reapply sunscreen every two hours if outside and more often if swimming or sweating. Use a broad-brimmed hat and sunglasses.

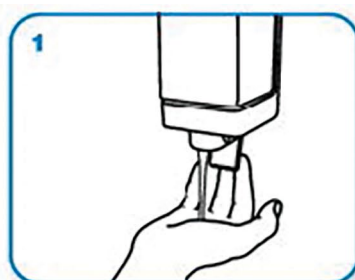
Hand hygiene

Washing your hands is important to prevent infections. Rinse hands in clean running water for 20 seconds, rub hands together with soap (liquid soap is best). Rub on both sides of hands and in between fingers and thumbs and round and round both hands. Rinse off soap in warm water. Dry your hands all over for 20 seconds using a clean dry towel. Further information is available at www.healthinfo.org.nz – search for 'hand hygiene'.

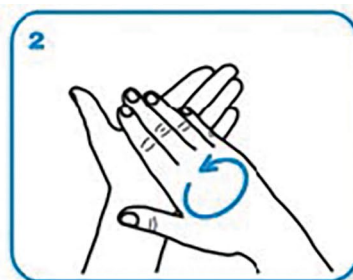
Recommended hand washing instructions



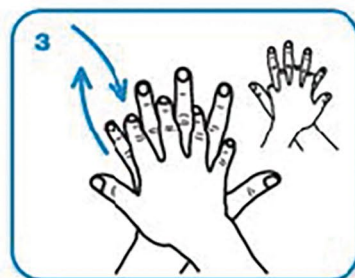
Wet hands with water



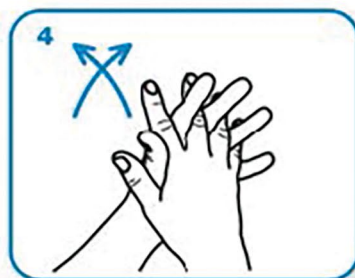
apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.



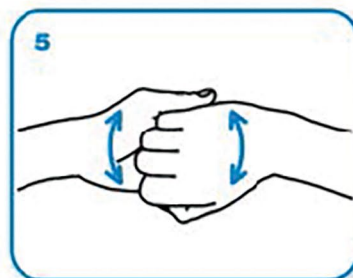
Rub hands palm to palm



right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa



palm to palm with fingers interlaced



backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa



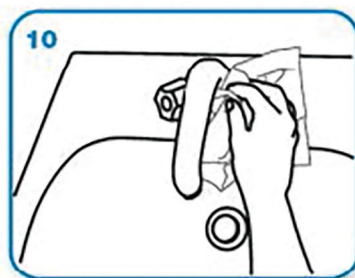
rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.



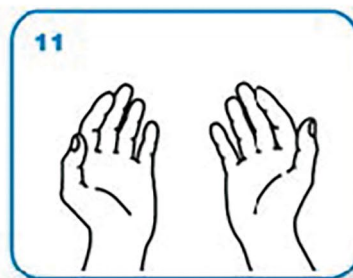
Rinse hands with water



dry thoroughly with a single use towel



use towel to turn off faucet




...and your hands are safe.

Food safety

It is important you maintain good food preparation practices to ensure you do not become ill with food poisoning. There are no special dietary changes required while receiving treatment. It is best to limit alcohol intake.

For further resources go to www.mpi.govt.nz search for 'food safety in the home'.

Five keys to safer food




Keep clean

- ✓ Wash your hands before handling food and often during food preparation
- ✓ Wash your hands after going to the toilet
- ✓ Wash and sanitize all surfaces and equipment used for food preparation
- ✓ Protect kitchen areas and food from insects, pests and other animals

Why?

While most microorganisms do not cause disease, dangerous microorganisms are widely found in soil, water, animals and people. These microorganisms are carried on hands, wiping cloths and utensils, especially cutting boards and the slightest contact can transfer them to food and cause foodborne diseases.

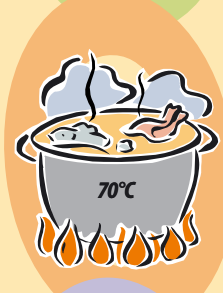


Separate raw and cooked

- ✓ Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other foods
- ✓ Use separate equipment and utensils such as knives and cutting boards for handling raw foods
- ✓ Store food in containers to avoid contact between raw and prepared foods

Why?

Raw food, especially meat, poultry and seafood, and their juices, can contain dangerous microorganisms which may be transferred onto other foods during food preparation and storage.

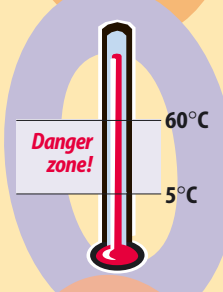


Cook thoroughly

- ✓ Cook food thoroughly, especially meat, poultry, eggs and seafood
- ✓ Bring foods like soups and stews to boiling to make sure that they have reached 70°C. For meat and poultry, make sure that juices are clear, not pink. Ideally, use a thermometer
- ✓ Reheat cooked food thoroughly

Why?

Proper cooking kills almost all dangerous microorganisms. Studies have shown that cooking food to a temperature of 70°C can help ensure it is safe for consumption. Foods that require special attention include minced meats, rolled roasts, large joints of meat and whole poultry.




Keep food at safe temperatures

- ✓ Do not leave cooked food at room temperature for more than 2 hours
- ✓ Refrigerate promptly all cooked and perishable food (preferably below 5°C)
- ✓ Keep cooked food piping hot (more than 60°C) prior to serving
- ✓ Do not store food too long even in the refrigerator
- ✓ Do not thaw frozen food at room temperature

Why?

Microorganisms can multiply very quickly if food is stored at room temperature. By holding at temperatures below 5°C or above 60°C, the growth of microorganisms is slowed down or stopped. Some dangerous microorganisms still grow below 5°C.



Use safe water and raw materials

- ✓ Use safe water or treat it to make it safe
- ✓ Select fresh and wholesome foods
- ✓ Choose foods processed for safety, such as pasteurized milk
- ✓ Wash fruits and vegetables, especially if eaten raw
- ✓ Do not use food beyond its expiry date

Why?

Raw materials, including water and ice, may be contaminated with dangerous microorganisms and chemicals. Toxic chemicals may be formed in damaged and mouldy foods. Care in selection of raw materials and simple measures such as washing and peeling may reduce the risk.

Knowledge = Prevention

Food Safety
World Health Organization

WHO/SDE/PHF/PDS-01.1
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What will happen after I finish my treatment?

When you have finished your treatment, you may be given an appointment to see your oncology team a few weeks after finishing your treatment. At this appointment, they will assess your recovery, the effectiveness of the treatment and any follow-up plans. For other concerns, not related to your cancer or treatment, you should continue to visit your general practice team.

You might feel more able at this point to increase your activity levels and try to return to a good fitness level. This will help keep you active in your community and a good quality of life. Your general practice team can tell you about community programmes if you would like help with this.

Ongoing care

For some people follow up will continue for a period of time with the Oncology Service or you may be returned to another hospital service for continued follow up and monitoring e.g. surgical services. Or your general practice team will continue your health care.

Throughout the course of your treatment the Oncology Service has kept your general practice team up to date on the care you have received by sending them correspondence after all clinic visits or hospital admissions you may have had.

If you have any ongoing queries or concerns in the first 6-8 weeks after treatment regarding side effects or follow up do not hesitate to call us by telephoning 03 364 0020.

Once treatment is complete and any side effects have settled, you should return to your general practice team for your ongoing healthcare including any ongoing prescriptions you will need. Your general practice team can also liaise with the Oncology Service regarding any queries or concerns about your condition or your treatment and related side effects.

Support and resources

What support services are available to me during my treatment?

There are a number of support services available to you when you visit the Oncology Service. Please discuss this with a member of staff for a referral to be made.

Interpreter

An interpreter service is available for your appointments should you need it. Please request this well ahead of time so it can be organised.

Dietitian

The Dietitian can assist you with maintaining and improving good nutrition during your treatment. Nutrition is important to maintain a healthy body weight, provide vitamins, minerals and nutrients for healing and to ensure good energy levels.

Social Workers

Social Workers offer psychosocial support and can help you with financial needs. They can also provide a link to support groups and resources.

Cancer Psychological and Social Support Service

The South Island Cancer Psychological and Social Support Service (CPSSS) is a specialist team of social workers and clinical psychologists, providing support to people with more complex psychological or social issues associated with cancer. Referral from the oncology team is required.

Occupational Therapists

Occupational Therapists can help you keep your independence in your own home. Self-care aids/equipment can be provided following assessment in your home.

Physiotherapists

Physiotherapists are available to assist your maximum level of independence. They will help you do as much as you are able and teach your family how best to assist you.

Speech Language Therapists

Speech language therapists are involved in helping with any speaking or swallowing difficulties.

Pharmacists

Pharmacists are the medication therapy experts in the health care system with a focus on medication safety and information while ensuring the best use of medicines.

Canterbury District Health Board Hauora Māori Services

The Maori Health Service offers support, advocacy and liaison between kaumātua, whānau, hapu, iwi and clinical staff to ensure culturally appropriate advice and support.

Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) Cancer Service

The AYA service provides co-ordinated age appropriate care and psycho-social support for adolescents and young adults (13 – 24 years) diagnosed with cancer.

Canterbury Regional Cancer and Haematology Service

You can access the website for more detailed information about our cancer services, treatment information resources, preparing for your appointments, location and contacts:

www.cdhb.health.nz, search for 'CRCHS'.

Cancer Society

The Cancer Society is located on Christchurch Hospital campus site within the Oncology Department. Staff are available to help you with any information or other services you may require. You will find them on the ground floor of the Oncology Service. They also have a website with many information resources available: www.cancernz.org.nz

Leukaemia & Blood Cancer NZ

The Leukaemia and Blood Cancer team have a range of resources and support services available on their website: www.leukaemia.org.nz

CanTeen

CanTeen is a support group for 13-24 year olds living with cancer. They also provide support for children/siblings of adults diagnosed with cancer. There is various support services, counselling and financial assistance available: www.canteen.org.nz

HealthInfo

HealthInfo is a health information website for the general public, specific to Canterbury. It has a range of health information including factsheets on different topics and descriptions of local health services and supports: www.healthinfo.co.nz

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us. If you have any suggestions, compliments or complaints you would like to raise with the Oncology Service please do not hesitate to contact us.

Alternatively you can use the feedback forms beside blue customer response boxes located around the hospital, or visit: www.cdhb.health.nz, look for Patients & visitors tab, then go to the 'Tell us what you think' page.

Frequently asked questions

Should I restrict my activities or diet?

As long as you feel capable, it is OK to continue with normal activities and diet. You may, however, become more tired than usual and notice changes in your body as a result of the treatment. It is important to look after yourself and avoid excessive tiredness and stress.

If you feel like you don't have enough energy to get through the day, the last thing you may want to do is exercise. However, any amount of activity (no matter how small) can help you regain lost strength, and may also help you better tolerate your cancer treatment.

A new exercise programme may not be recommended during or after your treatment. It is important to consult with your oncology team to determine what's safe for you.

Should I continue to take my regular medications?

Please check with your oncology team about any medications you are taking. It is helpful to bring in a list of all medications you are taking so a copy can be kept in your file.

Can I do Tattooing/Microblading?

This is not recommended while undergoing treatment particularly when your neutrophil count is low. Please speak to your oncology team for further guidance.

Can I have immunisations while receiving treatment?

It is safe to have the flu vaccine while on treatment. Best timing to have this vaccine is before starting treatment or at the beginning of your next treatment cycle.

If you are on an immune checkpoint inhibitor you should discuss with your oncology team first.

The shingles vaccine (Zostavax) is a live vaccine and should NOT be given while receiving treatment.

Can I visit my dentist while receiving treatment?

It is important to maintain good oral health including managing any issues arising from your teeth. Ideally any problems with your teeth should be sorted out prior to starting treatment and can be done by your regular dentist. You must tell them that you are starting cancer treatment. If you develop problems with your teeth while on treatment you are still able to have dental treatment but the best time to have this will be decided by your oncology specialist and will depend on the type of treatment you are having. Please talk to your oncology specialist or if it becomes more urgent, contact the oncology department for advice.

Can I bring family/whanau or friends with me to my appointments?

We encourage you to bring your family and friends to any of your appointments. It helps to have someone else to hear information or to write it down at times.

Can I drive when I am having treatment?

In most cases you can drive yourself to and from any treatment appointments. However it is useful to bring someone to your first treatment appointment to support you.

Other information

Driving and Parking at the Hospital

There is no parking onsite at the hospital. Instead shuttle services are available. You should have received information with your first appointment letter. If you have not, please contact us on (03) 364 0020 or by email: OncOutpatients@cdhb.health.nz. You can also visit the Canterbury DHB website for further details: www.cdhb.health.nz search for 'car parking'.

If you have difficulty getting transport to your oncology appointments please contact your oncology team.

Financial assistance

Financial help may be available through your local Work and Income office. Work and Income (0800 559 009) have information about financial assistance for people unable to work. Our Social Workers are available to support you with this, or visit www.workandincome.govt.nz

Accommodation

The Cancer Society may be able to assist in arranging accommodation for you and a family member or friend if you live outside of Christchurch while undergoing treatment. Please let us know if you require assistance and we will make this referral for you when you attend your appointment.

Travel Assistance

Travelling to Christchurch for treatment can be a challenge for many people. Financial assistance can be accessed for travel and accommodation under the National Travel Assistance programme (NTA). NTA is funded via the Ministry of Health and eligibility is dependent on how often and how far you need to travel to your hospital appointments. Please speak with your oncology team or your Social Worker for more information.

Alternatively you can contact the Cancer Society on 0800 226 237 or the Ministry of Health to see if you are eligible by calling 0800 281 222 (press 2). Or visit: www.health.govt.nz search for 'National Travel Assistance Scheme'.

Smoking

The Canterbury District Health Board is smoke and vape free. We are here to help you and your family to stop smoking. If you don't want to stop smoking we can help you manage your nicotine needs while you are in hospital. Please speak to your oncology team who can give you more information about the support available or visit: www.quit.org.nz or www.smokefreecanterbury.org.nz

Sexual health

Some people find their sexuality and/or sex life has been affected by treatment side effects. This includes feeling unattractive, lack of sexual drive, too tired, nausea and pain. If you are in a relationship it is important to keep communicating with your partner and share your fear and needs. If needing advice The Cancer Society can provide further information on sexuality and cancer.

Women may notice their periods become less regular or stop altogether while on treatment. You may experience hot flushes or other symptoms of menopause. You may notice vaginal changes including dryness, itching, burning and infections such as thrush. Speak to your oncology team or general practitioner if you are experiencing these problems.

Men may have difficulties achieving or maintaining an erection during treatment. For most men their sexual drive and fertility will return following treatment.

Fertility

Treatment can have effects on fertility either temporarily or permanently. If you want to have a child or more children talk to your oncology team about this, preferably before you start treatment. There are fertility preservation services in Canterbury that we can refer you to.

Contraception is important during treatment due to the risk of birth defects or miscarriage. It is recommended that you continue using contraception 12 months following treatment completion. If you are pregnant it is important that you discuss this with your oncology team immediately.

Talking to children

It is usually best to tell your family about your cancer sooner rather than later. Some people do worry children will not cope with the news. How much you tell children will depend on how old they are. Young children will need to know you may have to go into hospital and that the cancer is not their fault. Older children may understand a simple explanation of what is wrong whereas adolescents are able to understand more detailed information.

The children's school may have a counsellor that can provide support. Alternatively our social workers can provide support, please ask your oncology team about this service. The Cancer Society NZ has information about age appropriate information when talking to children. Visit www.cancernz.org.nz and search for 'Cancer in the Family'.

Do you still have questions you would like to ask?

It is helpful to make a note of any questions that you still have and discuss them with your oncology team. There is space below to jot down any questions you may have.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.