


Information for patients and carers

Patient Discharge Information

Discharge information for patients with an infection
and low white blood count (neutropenia) following
chemotherapy

Decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping wavy bands in shades of blue.

What is neutropenia?

Neutropenia is where there is a decrease in the number of circulating neutrophils in the bloodstream and is a common complication of chemotherapy.

What are neutrophils?

Neutrophils are produced in the bone marrow and circulate in the blood. They are a type of white blood cell that responds to infections and attacks bacteria and other foreign invaders directly.

If your neutrophils do decrease, then your risk of infections increases, this is why we ask you to:

- Avoid contact with anyone who has an obvious infection
- Avoid unpasteurised milk and cheese
- Avoid raw and undercooked food
- Wash your hands before you prepare and eat food
- Wash your hands after handling animals, fresh flowers, or pot plants
- Clean your teeth regularly.

What is neutropenic sepsis?

Neutropenic sepsis is when you have developed low levels of neutrophils as a side effect of the systemic anti-cancer treatment and have developed an infection. This can lead to widespread inflammation and organ damage and is a potentially life-threatening complication of neutropenia.

Low risk discharge

You have been identified as having low-risk neutropenic sepsis and are being discharged home with oral antibiotics to treat your infection.

However, if you experience ANY of the following symptoms, please phone the chemotherapy helpline immediately on 01772 523205:

- Rash
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Temperature – more than 38°C
- If you feel unwell and are concerned

Patients occasionally need to return to hospital to have antibiotics through a drip.

Following discharge:

- You will receive a telephone call from the oncology helpline on the next working day (Monday – Friday)
- Please do not wait for this call if you have any of the above symptoms, ring the 24-hour oncology helpline on 01772 523205
- Please ring the oncology helpline if you have ANY concerns or worries
- Please ensure that your family members are aware of this information
- You can drive and continue normal activities following discharge

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact the 24 -hour oncology helpline: 01772 523205

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

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www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.

This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

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