



Information for
patients and
carers

Management of low
magnesium

(Hypomagnesaemia)

What is hypomagnesaemia?

If you have been given this leaflet then you will have something called hypomagnesaemia. This is a condition where your body's levels of magnesium in the blood are abnormally low and this could be due to;

- Not getting enough magnesium in your diet
- Not being able to absorb magnesium properly
- Losing too much magnesium in your urine

A low magnesium can occur for number of other reasons such as:

- Diarrhoea
- Certain drugs such as those used to protect your stomach lining, diuretics, antibiotics, drugs used to treat cancer or immunosuppressants
- Or if you have had part of your small intestine removed

As you are a patient undergoing treatment for cancer – this is the likely cause.

What are the symptoms of hypomagnesaemia?

Patients do not often get symptoms from the low magnesium and when they do, they can be often be non-specific.

The symptoms can include:

- Tremors
- Muscle spasms
- Not able to sleep
- Irregular heart beat

- Mood changes
- Feeling sick
- Reduced appetite
- Loss of vision
- Fitting or seizures

What can I do?

For mild hypomagnesaemia, changes to your diet can help in bringing up the magnesium levels. Foods that contain magnesium include:

- Baked beans
- Black/Soy/White beans
- Yoghurt
- Canned condensed milk
- Halibut
- Tuna
- Prune juice
- Bananas
- Apples
- Avocados
- Bran
- Brown rice
- Dark chocolate
- Almonds
- Brazil and pine nuts
- Cashews
- Almond milk

- Pumpkin seeds
- Spinach
- Green leafy vegetables
- Tomato paste
- Smooth peanut butter
- Carrots
- Shredded wheat cereal
- Baked potatoes (including the skin)
- Wholemeal bread
- Salmon
- Broccoli

Your usual medications may need to be checked, as sometimes they can cause the magnesium levels to drop.

It is also not uncommon to have low potassium and calcium levels which will need to be corrected with medications and diet.

What treatments might I need?

The medications used to treat hypomagnesaemia depend on the severity.

Treatment at home:

If magnesium is given orally, this is usually a sachet called Magnaspartate.

You can prepare the Magnaspartate by dissolving one sachet in 50 – 200mls of water, tea or orange juice. Stir the solution until the liquid is cloudy to clear, then, drink immediately.

If you are unable to swallow or have a feeding tube, the Magnaspartate can be mixed with 200mls of water and administered via the tube, as soon as the solution has been prepared.

Instructions will be given on how often and when the sachets should be taken.

Treatment in hospital:

If your blood levels of magnesium are very low, you will be asked to come into hospital to have an infusion of magnesium. The magnesium is delivered into your blood stream in a drip, via a cannula or a centrally inserted catheter such as a Peripherally Inserted Central Catheter (PICC), central line or portacath. This will usually be administered in the Acute Oncology Hospital Outpatient Treatment (HOT) clinic.

If you are on treatment and have been informed that your levels are low, your bloods will be tested regularly to monitor your levels and treatment will be changed accordingly.

You will be informed on which day your bloods should be taken. Ideally this should happen as early as possible on that day to ensure that the results are available within 'working-hours' (08:30 – 16:30, Monday - Friday). We can then arrange a magnesium infusion in the HOT clinic.

Sometimes your blood results may not be ready in working hours. If this happens and your results are low, you may be contacted by the Doctor-on-call to ask you to come into hospital for an emergency infusion. If this does happen, please do not be alarmed.

The HOT clinic is not open on weekends or bank holidays to give magnesium infusions. If you are contacted by the Doctor-on-call and the HOT clinic is open the following day and you feel well, you can advise that you will attend the HOT clinic for an infusion, but **please contact the oncology helpline at 08:30am the following day to arrange this.**

The number for the oncology helpline is: 01772 523205

If the HOT clinic is not open the following day, you must attend the hospital as advised by the Doctor.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

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

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking including Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal.

If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Gujarati:

આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણામાં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:

Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi.”

Polish:

Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:

دو سر ی زبانوں او ر بڑی اگر آپ کو ہی معلومات سمجھنے کے لیے مدد کی ضرورت ہے تو یی چھپا یں ییہ ابی دست ہو یسکت ہے برا ئے مہر یان پو ے یچھہ ی۔ معلومات

Arabic:

مطبوعة بأحرف كبيرة و بلغات إذا كنت تريد مساعدة في فهم هذه المعلومات يُرجى أن تطلب أخرى يمكن تو فسير هذه المعلومات

Department: Acute Oncology

Division: Oncology

Production date: March 2016

Review date: May 2024

CA41 V2