

Cancer treatment alert card

Information for patients

You have been given this leaflet and alert card because you are having systemic anti-cancer treatment (SACT). This includes chemotherapy and immunotherapy. These treatments can have serious and potentially life-threatening side effects.

This leaflet lists some important side effects to look out for. It also tells you what to do if you develop them. The sooner you report any symptoms, the easier it is to treat them.

The alert card is for you to keep with you at all times. It fits in a purse or wallet so that you can carry it easily. **If you are unwell, please show the card to any healthcare professionals you meet. This includes ambulance staff, or the receptionist in A&E or at your GP surgery.** The card contains important information for them and should make sure that you are **seen immediately** if needed.

Keep a list of the names of the drugs you are having and any other medicines you usually take. You could do this in your phone or on a piece of paper. You can show this to the healthcare professionals.

What is systemic anti-cancer treatment?

Systemic anti-cancer treatment means drugs that are used to treat cancer. This includes chemotherapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapy and hormonal therapy. These treatments can be given alone or in combination. They may be given as injections into the bloodstream (intravenously), or by mouth as tablets or capsules. Anti-cancer treatment, especially chemotherapy and immunotherapy, can have side effects that need urgent treatment.

Side effects to look out for

This information is from the Cancer Research UK booklet **Your cancer treatment record** and is used with permission. It contains important information about side effects to look out for.

The traffic light system groups side effects into red, amber and green according to how serious they could be. You must contact your advice line if you have 1 red or 2 amber symptoms. If you have 2 amber symptoms, that makes a red.

Red

Call 999 if you have:

- chest pain
- difficulty breathing.

Call your 24-hour advice line immediately if you have any of these symptoms:

- feeling generally unwell
- shivery episodes or flu-like symptoms
- a temperature above 37.5°C
- a temperature below 36°C
- being sick (vomiting)
- diarrhoea (4 or more loose bowel movements in 24 hours)
- bleeding or unusual bruising
- swollen or painful legs
- a sore mouth that stops you eating or drinking.

Amber

Call your advice line within 24 hours if you have any of these symptoms, but call immediately if they get worse:

- a sore mouth, but you can still eat and drink
- itchy or painful skin changes
- sore, watery eyes
- an increase in pain
- constipation
- feeling sick (nausea)
- diarrhoea (2 to 4 loose bowel movements in 24 hours).

Green

Look out for these symptoms and discuss them with your cancer doctor, specialist nurse or GP. If things get worse or continue, contact your 24-hour advice line:

- tiredness
- skin changes that are not itchy or painful
- mood changes
- difficulty in coping with the treatment
- loss of appetite.

The alert card has a shorter version of this information and lists all the red symptoms. It should have your 24-hour advice line number on it.

If you are on anti-cancer treatment and you feel unwell, always seek medical advice from your 24-hour advice line. Do this even if your symptoms are not listed here.

At Macmillan, we give people with cancer everything we've got. If you are diagnosed, your worries are our worries. We will help you live life as fully as you can.

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call **0808 808 00 00** or visit **macmillan.org.uk**

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