

# Sight or hearing

Changes to your **sight or vision** can be a symptom of some types of cancer, such as [brain tumours](#) and [cancers of the eye](#). Symptoms include:

- losing part of your vision
- blurred, double or tunnel vision
- seeing flashing lights and shadows
- brown or dark patches on the white of the eye.

Some cancer treatments can affect your sight. Some chemotherapies and targeted treatments can make your eyes sore or swollen, dry, red, itchy, or sensitive to light. Some treatments may cause cataracts (clouding of the lens of the eye) or other eye problems.

If you have any of these symptoms during treatment or after it finishes, contact your doctor straight away. You may also need an eye check with a specialist eye doctor (ophthalmologist).

Changes in **hearing** can be a symptom of some types of [head and neck cancers](#). Treatment for some types of head and neck cancer, such as [nasopharyngeal cancer](#), can sometimes affect your hearing. Hearing loss may come on gradually in the first 2 years after treatment.

Signs of hearing loss can include:

- difficulty hearing other people clearly or understanding what they say
- listening to music or watching TV at a higher volume than usual
- needing subtitles on films or TV programmes.

Some chemotherapy drugs may cause ringing in the ears. This is called tinnitus. It often gets better as your ears recover from the effects of treatment. But it can sometimes be permanent. If there is a chance that treatment may affect your hearing, your cancer specialist will explain this beforehand.

## Tips for dealing with sight or hearing problems

- Have your eyes checked regularly and tell your doctor if you have any problems with your sight. You should let your optician know that you are having cancer treatment.
- If your eyes become watery or feel sore, your doctor can give you eye drops to help. If your eyes get red and inflamed (conjunctivitis), tell your doctor. You may need antibiotic eye cream.
- You can ask for written information in large print, or if it is okay to record conversations with you.
- Do not drive or operate machinery if your vision is affected.
- If you have [hearing loss](#), you will be assessed by an ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgeon and audiologist. Treatment will depend on the cause of your hearing loss but may include a hearing aid.
- Tell people your hearing is not good. Talk in a well-lit place so that you can see faces clearly.
- Try to get rid of background noise, such as TV or radio, when talking to people.
- There are phones that can make sounds louder and help you to hear callers more easily. People with hearing loss can communicate through text systems such as Next Generation Text (NGT).
- Some people with tinnitus use background noise to distract them. This may be something simple like a radio or electric fan, or a specially designed device.
- You may want to bring someone to speak or sign for you at appointments. You can also ask your doctors or nurses to write things down for you.
- Tinnitus can be made worse by [stress and anxiety](#). Learning ways to relax can lower stress levels. Your specialist nurse, GP or staff at the tinnitus clinic may be able to refer you for therapies that can aid relaxation.

## Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on [be.macmillan.org.uk](http://be.macmillan.org.uk) such as:

- [Understanding primary brain tumours](#)
- [Understanding head and neck cancers](#)
- [Side effects of cancer treatment](#)
- [Managing the late effects of head and neck cancer treatment.](#)

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line.

## Further Macmillan support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Or visit [macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk) where you can [chat to us online](#).

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

Or if you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find others who understand on our [Online Community](#).

## Other useful contact details

- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) – visit [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk) or call 0303 123 9999
- British Tinnitus Association (BTA) – visit [www.tinnitus.org.uk](http://www.tinnitus.org.uk) or call 0800 018 0527
- Hearing Link – visit [www.hearinglink.org](http://www.hearinglink.org) or call 07526 123 255
- Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) – visit <https://rnid.org.uk> or call 0808 808 0123.

## Notes and questions

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