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# Ambulatory Care; Your Guide

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**Bud Flanagan**

**Patient Information**





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## What is Ambulatory Inpatient Care?

Ambulatory Care or AMBIN refers to treatments delivered without being admitted to hospital. This is so that patients can remain at home for as long as possible whilst having their chemotherapy treatment.

The Royal Marsden is committed to delivering excellent patient care, ensuring innovative treatment and delivering patient care in the most appropriate setting. The Bud Flanagan Haemato-oncology Unit has developed a service where a number of chemotherapy treatments, which used to require lengthy hospital stays, may now be delivered to patients whilst they are at home. The service is based on Bud Flanagan West Ward and is called the Ambulatory Inpatient Service or AMBIN.

The Ambulatory service is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The service includes the delivery of chemotherapy through ambulatory pumps called CADD pumps. CADD pumps are an established way of delivering chemotherapy to patients out of hospital and are used by many other hospitals around the country. It is a safe and effective way of delivering treatment outside of the traditional hospital environment.

## What are the advantages of being an Ambulatory Inpatient?

- You will continue to receive full access (24 hours a day) to expert medical and nursing care despite not staying in a hospital ward
- You will be able to remain at home with visits to the Ambulatory Inpatient Bay for assessment and treatment. Alternatively, you may be offered the opportunity to stay in the ambulatory patient accommodation if you live more than an hour away. Delivering treatment this way allows you to enjoy daily life and routine away from the hospital
- You will have regular contact with experienced nurses and your medical team, and you will meet your consultants once a week.

You need to be aware that at some point after your treatment has been given, you will need to be admitted to hospital.

## Is Ambulatory Inpatient Care right for me?

Your safety and the quality of care that you receive is of the utmost importance to us. It is therefore important to find out whether this type of care is suitable for you. This will be discussed with you by your Consultant/Specialist Registrar and your Nurse Specialist (Key Worker).

## What happens each day during treatment?

### Having a stem cell transplant

If you are having your autologous stem cell transplant in AMBIN, the first two days will require you to be here for approximately nine hours each day. This is due to the length of time it takes for your treatment to be delivered.

### The first day

You will be given an early appointment for 9am. The first day consists of a blood test and insertion of a cannula. These blood results take 90 minutes to come back from the laboratory.

The doctor or advanced nurse practitioner will then confirm if you are fit to have the chemotherapy and transplant. The chemotherapy is then made up (it cannot be made up before) and usually if you come in at 9am for your blood sample, your chemotherapy will be given to you around 1pm–2pm. You will then have oral cryotherapy to prevent mucositis which is a common side effect of Melphalan. We will give you ice chips, ice lollies or ice-cold water 10 minutes prior to starting chemotherapy, during the infusion, and 40 to 60 minutes after, as tolerated.

## **The second day**

You will be in the unit for approximately nine hours. This is because you need to be given four hours of intravenous fluids prior to receiving your stem cells and you need to have another four hours of fluids following the procedure. The infusion of the stem cells takes approximately one hour.

## **Chemotherapy treatments delivered via CADD pumps and bodyguard infusion pumps**

- You will be given an appointment time to come to AMBIN to have an assessment, which includes blood tests, observations and a checklist to see if you are suitable for ambulatory chemotherapy - these will be carried out by nurses from Bud Flanagan West Ward on your treatment days
- If the team agrees that you can receive your treatment via CADD pump or bodyguard pump, then you will be connected to your chemotherapy in the hospital and then go home with the chemotherapy in a bag which you carry
- You will come into the hospital each time the treatment needs to be changed - the reception staff on the ward will give you an appointment
- The CADD pump with your chemotherapy in it goes into a backpack, (a bit like a rucksack or bum bag) and it remains connected to you all the time

- You can sleep with it, but you need to make sure that the rucksack remains upright, wherever possible. You can shower with it attached to you, but try to keep the pump out of the water spray as much as possible. With the bodyguard infusion pump, you can use your own bag.

### **For all treatments:**

- You will have a routine blood test and medical review by a doctor or advanced nurse practitioner and be seen by the nurses on the unit at other times – this allows us to assess whether you need to be admitted to hospital or whether you are safe to return home
- The length of your appointment will depend on your blood result that day. We may have to administer blood products and intravenous replacements
- If you feel unwell at any time, take your temperature with the thermometer supplied
- You can phone the ward at any time to get advice about any worries you may have (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline is also available 24 hours a day and can provide you with telephone advice. Please advise them you are on the AMBIN programme (see contact details on page 8).

## **Food on the Ambulatory Inpatient Care Unit**

Food is provided for you whilst you are attending an ambulatory appointment, and is served at the following times:

<b>Lunch</b>	Monday to Friday, 12.30pm–2.15pm Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays, 12pm–2pm
<b>Dinner</b>	Monday to Friday, 6pm–7.30pm Saturdays and Sundays, 6.15pm–7.15pm

Please ask the nursing staff about food that is safe to eat at home during this period of your treatment, as there may be some exceptions.



We will provide you with a food safety patient information booklet - your nurse or dietitian will explain further if required.

## **What if I become unwell during my stay on the Ambulatory Inpatient Care Unit?**

It is quite possible that you will feel unwell during your treatment at some point. Should this happen, please seek advice immediately from the hospital, by either calling the ward for advice or calling The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline (see contact details on page 8).

Look out for the following signs or symptoms:

- Shivers or hot flushes
- Temperatures close to or above 38°C
- Persistent episodes of vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- Shortness of breath or difficulty with your breathing
- Generally unwell even if your temperature is normal.

## **What should I do if I become unwell?**

**Do not hesitate to call us at any time, even if it is the middle of the night – do not wait until the morning, as we want to hear from you straight away if you are unwell.**

**If you are in any doubt, please call the contact numbers on page 8. It is very important that you phone first and do not just arrive at the hospital, as this will allow staff to prepare for your arrival and ensure that you are reviewed straight away.**

We will ask you to come to the Ambulatory Inpatient Bay on Bud Flanagan West Ward. If you are unable to come to the unit, we will then decide the next course of action. When you have been reviewed by a nurse and doctor in the Ambulatory Inpatient Bay, it may be necessary to admit you to the ward.

This is to ensure you are monitored more closely and receive the necessary treatments such as fluids or antibiotics that cannot be managed within the Ambulatory Inpatient Care setting. Please bring your belongings with you in case you need to be admitted when you are unwell.

## What if it is an emergency?

An emergency is any urgent situation where you require immediate medical and nursing assistance. You will need to call 999. You must carry your ALERT card at all times as this will explain to a local Accident and Emergency department the urgency of treatment. If you do end up being treated in another hospital, it is very important that they contact us as soon as possible. Please encourage them to do so if you are able to.

## Personal hygiene

While you are undergoing chemotherapy, it is recommended that you shower and change your clothes daily. Before using the shower, allow it to run for approximately five minutes. This is to flush the water through the pipes so that the bacteria in the pipes is diluted and makes it less of a risk for you.

An electric razor should be used for shaving as you are at an increased risk of bleeding and infection due to your very low blood counts.

Thoroughly wash your hands - this is especially important after using the toilet and before preparing or eating food.

## Mouth care

The chemotherapy you have received may damage the lining of your mouth. Your mouth may become sore and inflamed - this is called mucositis. It is very important that you follow a mouth care routine to reduce the risk of infections.

### **Recommended mouth care routine:**

- Clean your teeth three times a day after each meal with a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste
- Rinse your mouth regularly throughout the day with water.

## Eating and drinking

You must try and aim to drink 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid a day.

While you are having treatment, we advise that you use safe food handling. There are very few foods you cannot eat but this will be explained to you by your nurse. The Royal Marsden booklet *Eating well when you have cancer* is available on the unit and on our website, for further details and meal ideas.

## Infection

During this time your immune system is severely compromised and you are therefore more prone to infections.

What you can do for yourself:

- Maintain a high level of personal hygiene
- Always ensure that you wash your hands thoroughly with antibacterial soap. One of the most important factors in stopping the spread of infection is washing your hands. Please wash your hands before you prepare food, and after visiting the toilet
- Avoid exposure to freshly cut flowers and plants and do not do any gardening - all of these are sources of infection
- If you have pets, avoid changing cat litter and clearing up after dogs
- Take your temperature at regular intervals (a minimum of every four hours through the day) and before you go to bed
- Avoid people with signs of a cold such as cough, sneezing, runny nose
- Avoid crowded places
- Remember to carry out your mouth care regularly
- It is important that if you or your carer develop symptoms of a cold, you telephone us before entering the unit
- Please do not mix with other patients and their carers whilst on the unit.

## Contact details

**Ambulatory Inpatient Care** 020 8915 413

Monday to Friday, 8.30am–8pm

Or for specialist nursing advice call:

### Specialist Sisters

Stem Cell Transplant Co-ordinator Ext. 1368

Advanced Nurse Practitioner Ext. 4280

Leukaemia Nurse Specialist Ext. 1225

Myeloma Nurse Specialist Ext. 1249

Lymphoma Nurse Specialist Ext. 4080

Ambulatory Care Nurse Ext. 4113

Ambulatory Care Admin Ext. 4111

Alternatively, please call:

**The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline:** 020 8915 6899  
(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments.

This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

## Notes and questions

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## References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Telephone: Chelsea 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

Sutton 020 8661 3759 / 3951

Email: [patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk](mailto:patientcentre@rmh.nhs.uk)

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Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

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[royalmarsden.org](http://royalmarsden.org)

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