

The ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

Keeping you well during your treatment

Top tips

Senior Adult Oncology Programme team

Patient Information



NHS

Introduction

We appreciate that cancer and anti-cancer treatment can affect your day-to-day life. The Senior Adult Oncology Programme (SAOP) team have put together some of their top tips to help keep you well and feeling like yourself.



Physiotherapy

Top tips for staying active and keeping well

- **Keep moving:** Not being physically active can make it harder for your body to manage the side effects of chemotherapy. Whether it's making a cup of tea or going up and down the stairs regularly throughout the day, make sure you make time to get up and move around.
- **Keep strong:** Many patients on anti-cancer treatments experience muscle loss. Research shows that doing simple exercises can help to keep you strong, reduces the risk of falls, and improves anti-cancer treatment tolerance and quality of life.
- **Keep calm:** Breathing control techniques can reduce and manage anxiety.

Useful resources

Visit the **Macmillan Cancer Support** website for further information on breathing control techniques.

www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/stories-and-media/booklets/managing-breathlessness

Visit **The Royal Marsden Patient information library** for videos on exercise at home.

<https://patientinfolibrary.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/videos?keys=exercise>

Visit the **World Cancer Research Fund International's** website for information on being physically active.

www.wcrf.org/diet-activity-and-cancer/cancer-prevention-recommendations/be-physically-active/

Visit the **Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)'s** website for exercise videos to help prevent falls.

www.csp.org.uk/news/2017-09-27-csp-launches-video-demonstrate-six-simple-exercises-stop-falls

Visit the **Dorothy House** website for the Calming hand tool, to help with breathlessness and anxiety.

www.dorothyhouse.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/DH_CalmingHand_A4_v2_Download.pdf



Nutrition

Top tips for staying well nourished

- **Ensure you are getting enough protein:** Protein helps to maintain your muscles, keeping them strong along with physical activity. Aim to have one 20g portion of protein at each mealtime (eg eggs, beans, meat, fish).
- **Eat little and often:** If you are struggling to eat due to symptoms such as nausea or low appetite, try to have something small every 2–3 hours, but remember to get your protein in (eg fruit with yoghurt, cheese and crackers, a boiled egg).
- **Weigh yourself regularly:** If you are losing weight, add extra calories with whole milk, butter or oils, cheese, cream (or dairy alternatives).

Useful resources

Visit **The Royal Marsden Patient information library** to read the booklet *Eating well when you have cancer*.

<https://patientinfolibrary.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/eating-well-when-you-have-cancer>

Visit the **World Cancer Research Fund's** website for information on eating well, recipes and the helpline.

www.wcrf-uk.org/preventing-cancer/our-cancer-prevention-recommendations/

www.wcrf-uk.org/healthy-eating/

www.wcrf-uk.org/health-advice-and-support/living-with-cancer/the-cancer-nutrition-helpline/

Visit the **Malnutrition Pathway** website for more ideas of how to include protein in your diet.

www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/library/proteinideas.pdf



Occupational therapy

Top tips for staying independent

- **Keep involved:** Continue to participate in your usual daily activities during treatment to maintain independence both during and beyond treatment. Fatigue/tiredness is very common when on treatment so pace yourself – take frequent rest breaks during activities before you get too tired to continue. Doing the activities that you enjoy, as well as daily relaxation exercises can help with managing stress and anxiety.
- **Accept support:** This can help you to manage challenges that may present during treatment. Local charities, such as Age UK, offer practical support and befriending services. The Royal Marsden also offers a befriending service.
- **Thinking:** Treatment often affects cognition (paying attention, memory, finding ‘the word’, thinking quickly). Using written reminders and alarms, reducing distractions and describing the word can help.

Useful resources

Visit the **Macmillan Cancer Support** website to read the booklet *Coping with fatigue (tiredness)*.

www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/stories-and-media/booklets/coping-with-fatigue-tiredness

Visit **Maggie's** website for relaxation and breathing exercises.

www.maggies.org/cancer-support/managing-emotions/relaxation-and-breathing-exercises/

Visit the **Age UK** website for support services.

www.ageuk.org.uk/

Visit **The Royal Marsden Patient information library** to watch videos about cancer-related cognitive impairment (CRCI).

<https://patientinfolibrary.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/videos>



Medication

Top tips to cope with chemotherapy side effects

Although chemotherapy targets cancer cells, healthy cells can be damaged too. This can lead to side effects such as immune system weakness, hair loss, nausea and vomiting. Preparing for treatment can help with the management of side effects and can reduce short-term and long-term chemotherapy toxicities.

- Chemotherapy can weaken your immune system, so make sure your routine vaccinations are up to date. Your pharmacist and oncology team will advise you on the right vaccines.
- If you experience any of the symptoms or side effects below, please seek advice from your medical oncology team (not the SAOP team):
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Diarrhoea

- Constipation
 - Difficult breathing
 - Blood in urine or/and stools
 - Unexpected bruising and bleeding and severe pain
- If you wish to take any dietary supplements or herbal medicines, please speak with your pharmacist and oncology team first. Herbs and plants may be natural, but they can interfere with your cancer medicines or cause unexpected side effects.

Useful resources

Visit the **Macmillan Cancer Support** website for further information on an A to Z of treatments.

www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/treatments-and-drugs

Visit **The Royal Marsden Patient information library** to read the booklet *Cancer and dietary supplements*.

<https://patientinfolibrary.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/cancer-and-dietary-supplements>

Contact details

The Senior Adult Oncology Programme (SAOP) team

Tel: 020 8661 3742

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

You can ring the hotline 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.

For local support services, please contact your GP.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared in the production of this booklet.

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

The patient information service is generously supported by The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity.

royalmarsden.org

Registered Charity No.1095197



Published February 2024. Planned review February 2027
© The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust RS-1822-01



Radiotherapy and
Chemotherapy Services
F538021 & F538022

