

General instructions for patients receiving medical treatment for cancer

Cancer and its medical treatments can cause a wide variety of symptoms. However, you should lead as normal a life as possible during the treatment.

- Fatigue and tiredness are very common symptoms. Getting enough rest, exercising and daily outdoor activities can help ease the symptoms. Exercise is recommended whenever your health allows it.
- Cancer and its medical treatments can cause mental distress and changes in body image and sexuality.
- The medicines used in cancer therapy are excreted into urine and other bodily fluids. Make sure you follow good intimate and hand hygiene. Direct skin contact with bodily fluids should be avoided.
- Drink plenty of fluids (water and/or juice) for a few days following the treatment (2 liters per day).
- Try to eat regularly when receiving cancer treatments. Good nutrition helps you stay strong throughout the treatments.
- Monitoring your weight during the treatments is important. Your weight gives us information about your nutritional status during the treatment. Weight changes can also affect medicine dosing.
- The treatment can cause thinning of the hair or hair loss. If necessary, you will receive a payment commitment for a wig.
- Some medical treatments for cancer weaken your immune system and increase the risk of infection. During the treatments, avoid people who have symptoms of an infection such as a common cold or gastroenteritis.
- You can have a sauna while receiving cancer treatments, but we recommend avoiding swimming in both swimming pools and natural waters due to a risk of infection.

- Your skin may become sensitive to sunlight. You can protect yourself from the sun by wearing long-sleeved clothes and a hat and using high-SPF sunscreen.
- Taking vitamin D is recommended during cancer treatments, but taking other vitamins or herbal products should be avoided.
- It is best to refrain from drinking alcohol during the treatments.
- Remember to bring up all necessary certificate and prescription matters when you have a doctor's appointment.
- The hospital can write you a travel certificate for using a Kela taxi if your health requires it.
- You can receive support from special workers such as a psychologist, hospital chaplain, clinical dietitian, sex therapist, physiotherapist, and social worker, and a counselling nurse from the Syöpäyhdistys.

Changes in cognitive performance

During medical treatments for cancer, many patients experience a decline in their cognitive capabilities such as difficulties with memory and concentration, difficulty to multitask, and difficulties with reading comprehension and naming. Motor coordination problems can occur as well. Hormone therapies and sleeping difficulties related to menopause as well as aging can cause similar changes in cognitive performance.

The symptoms will ease when the treatments have ended and usually disappear within a few years. For a small number of patients, the symptoms may persist for a longer time. Healthy lifestyle and a regular daily routine will help you manage the symptoms. Brain exercises such as sudoku and crossword puzzles, or reading can help with rehabilitation. If the symptoms are difficult and managing everyday life is hard, talk about it with a nurse or a doctor.

If you have non-urgent treatment-related questions, you can contact the treating unit via Maisa or by telephone, weekdays 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m., tel. 09 471 74 900. Our service promise is to reply to non-urgent messages within two working days.