About cancer treatment side effects

Cancer treatments like chemotherapy and radiotherapy kill cancer cells but can also damage normal cells. This can cause side effects for the patient.

Not everyone having cancer treatment will have side effects, but most people experience some.

This section describes some of the most common side effects of cancer treatment. It explains:

- how to identify and manage these side effects
- how to educate your patients about managing their symptoms
- when to call the doctor.

Remember, the information in this booklet does not replace advice provided by a medical doctor or nurse experienced in cancer care.

Important

Call the doctor straight away (even if it is a weekend or evening) if your patient has:

- chest pain
- temperature of 38°C or above
- chills, shivers, shakes
- pain, burning, blood in urine (wee)
- shortness of breath
- diarrhoea that won’t stop
- vomiting that won’t stop
- drowsiness and confusion.

If you are unable to contact a doctor for advice, the patient should go to ‘Emergency’ at their nearest hospital for assessment.

* not corrected by putting on a jumper.

Bush medicine

Bush medicine could cause problems for patients having cancer treatment. Your patient should check with their doctor before using bush medicine.