



Taking the next step
Caring for you during
your chemotherapy

Welcome.

We welcome you and you loved ones to Icon Cancer Centre.

At Icon, care is more than just a word - it is a belief in a personal approach that matches your needs and those of your loved ones in the toughest of times. We understand that a cancer diagnosis can be confronting for you and your loved ones. We are here to support you with compassion, knowledge and hope.

This booklet supports the information provided to you by your care team. Please feel free to ask any questions and discuss the information in this booklet with your doctor or member of our team.

Contents

Your care team	3
Preparing for treatment	4
Your first appointment	6
Starting treatment	7
What to bring	8
Hospital admission	9
Understanding fees	10
Privacy and personal information	11
Common terms	12
Notes	14
Sources of additional information	15

Your care team

Every member of our multidisciplinary team are here to help you. Here are some of the people you may meet and the role they have in your care.

- **Medical Oncologists** are doctors who specialise in diagnosing and treating cancer with the use of chemotherapy drugs, immunotherapy and hormone therapies. Your medical oncologist will develop and continually review your treatment plan and in most cases, lead and manage your overall care.
- **Haematologists** specialise in treating blood disorders and cancers affecting the blood e.g. leukaemia, or blood forming organs such as the bone marrow.
- **Oncology Nurses** will support you throughout many areas of your treatment and overall wellbeing, including administering your chemotherapy, monitoring your symptoms and managing any side effects. Your nursing team can answer any questions you may have and provide additional sources of information regarding your treatment and diagnosis.
- **Administration team** will coordinate your treatment at the centre, including appointment bookings, billing and connecting you with external support services. If you have any questions or are ever unsure who to talk to, our administration team can help.
- **Pharmacist** staff are committed to supporting your care. Our pharmacists work with you and alongside your doctor and nursing team to make sure the treatment you receive is optimal and safe. Our pharmacists are available on-site to answer questions, provide advice and information about your medications.

You may need additional support from other allied health professionals such as dietitians or physiotherapists while you are having treatment. Talk to your doctor or nurse about what services are available and how they can help you.

Preparing for treatment

Receiving a cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming. You may feel unable to take everything in or like you have forgotten some of the details.

It is important to ask questions that will help you gain a full understanding of your diagnosis. Having a loved one with you can help. They can be there for support and can also ask any questions you may not think of.

Questions for your doctor

Below are some questions you might like to ask your doctor. It can be useful to write down the answers, or ask your doctor or carer to do so for you.

- What type of cancer do I have?
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- What is the stage of my cancer?
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- What are my treatment options?
.....
- What type of treatment do you recommend and why?
.....
- What is the goal of treatment?
.....
- How will treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise etc.?
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- How will treatment affect my ability to become pregnant or have children?
.....
- How will cancer affect my sexuality and intimacy with my partner?
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- What long-term side effects may be associated with my cancer treatment?
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- Who can provide me with information about the cost of my treatment?
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- Is there a clinical trial I might be eligible for?
.....
- Who can I call if I have questions or problems?
.....



Your first appointment

At your first appointment, you will meet with your doctor who will talk you through your diagnosis and your treatment plan, and address any concerns and questions you may have. One of our experienced nurses will take some time to discuss possible treatment side effects and how to manage them, and any possible anxiety you and your family might be feeling.

When you first arrive, let our administration team know you're here so they can welcome you to the centre. We understand that your family are an important part of your support network and we encourage you to bring a support person with you when you visit our centre.

Your comfort is our priority

It is important to us that you feel as comfortable as possible during your visit. We offer a range of amenities for patients and families to make things a bit easier, including:

- Complimentary wireless internet throughout the centre
- Complimentary snacks and access to tea and coffee facilities
- Private on-site consultation rooms so you can access treatment and appointments from the same location

Icon Cancer Centre is a smoke-free environment. Please speak with your doctor or nurse if you require support to help you quit smoking.

We will always have time to help and support you. If you're unsure about something or would like help finding more information about your diagnosis and treatment, please ask your doctor or nurse.

Starting treatment

Most chemotherapy treatments are given in repeating cycles. The length of a cycle depends on the treatment being given.

Before you begin, your care team will talk you through all aspects of our treatment and ask you to give informed consent.

What to expect

When it's time to start your treatment, in most cases, an intravenous [IV] drip will be inserted into a vein in your arm or your Central Venous Access Device [CVAD] accessed by one of our experienced nurses. A blood test is usually taken prior to your treatment to ensure your blood counts are at a satisfactory level for your first treatment.

Depending on your treatment, you might also be given anti-nausea medication.

You might receive drugs during your treatment that make you feel drowsy. If this happens it is important you have a family member, friend or carer to take you home. If you need help with transport please speak to our administration team, who can arrange on your behalf.



What to bring

Having a few personal items can make you more comfortable during treatment. Here is a checklist of things you could bring with you:

- **Something to read**
A favourite novel, poetry book or light magazine can be a calming distraction. We will have some magazines available too.
- **Mobile phone and/or laptop/tablet**
Free wireless internet is available throughout the centre to help you stay connected. Bring your charger just in case.
- **Warm clothing**
Loose layers will help with access for treatment and let you take clothing off or put on depending on how you're feeling. Some patients find thick socks or slippers comforting. We can also provide you with a blanket if you need.
- **Favourite food or snacks**
We will have food and drink available, but you might want to bring your favourite snacks and drinks.
- **A family member or friend**
All our treatment areas have room for your carer to come along for support and give you a ride home.

- Some important essentials to bring to your first treatment are:
 - Medicare card
 - Health insurance card
 - Concession, pension or DVA card [if applicable]
 - Safety net entitlement card
 - Your current medications including any creams, inhalers, patches or drops
 - Any medicines bought over the counter or at a supermarket
 - Any supplements or natural medicines you take

Please do not bring large amounts of money or other valuables to the centre as we are unable to offer secure storage for personal belongings left unattended.

Making appointments

Appointments with your doctor or for your treatment can be made in person or over the telephone with our friendly administration team.

Treatment appointment times are allocated according to the length of time it will take to administer your treatment.

If you're unable to attend your appointment please let our administration team know as soon as possible so we can work with you to arrange a more suitable time.

Hospital admission

During treatment, you may develop side effects or symptoms that require you to be admitted to hospital. A hospital admission could be for any of the following reasons:

- Sometimes side effects from your chemotherapy can make you sick and you may need to be admitted for a trial of different anti-sickness medication. Additional fluids may be required which will be given through an intravenous cannula in your vein or a central venous catheter [if you have had one inserted].
- Your blood results may mean that your doctor would prefer you are admitted to hospital for a transfusion of blood or platelets.
- Your temperature is raised continuously above 37.5 degrees Celsius and you have other symptoms that suggest you may have an infection and will need antibiotics administered either through an intravenous cannula into your vein or central venous catheter [if you have had one inserted].
- You may develop sores in your mouth that become painful and spread, thereby requiring you to be admitted for treatment.
- Sometimes cancer treatments may cause diarrhoea which, if it becomes troublesome, may require you to be admitted.

- Your doctor may require you to have procedures such as x-rays and ultrasounds and some of these may require overnight preparation.

We will take the time to go through treatment side effects with you including what to do in an emergency and what to look out for. We encourage you and your support persons to ask questions at any time, and will provide ongoing opportunities for you to do so.

It is important to always be on the alert for common signs of an infection, such as:

- Chills and/or shaking
- Fever
- Cough or sore throat
- Loose stools or diarrhoea for over 24 hours
- Change in urination [frequency or burning sensation]
- Vaginal discharge or itching
- Redness, swelling or sores on your skin
- Earache
- Difficult or painful breathing, wheezing

If you experience any sign of infection, no matter how small, call your treatment team immediately or go to your local emergency department.

Understanding fees

We will take the time to talk through all aspects of your treatment plan and provide you with a detailed cost estimate before your first treatment.

If your treatment plan changes, we will discuss any costs with you and make sure there are no surprises throughout your treatment.

Self-funded patients

If you have an insurance excess, co-payment, basic cover or no health insurance, our reception team will provide you with a detailed cost estimate and talk you through all the expected costs of your treatment. Payment is required on the day of each treatment. If you have financial concerns at any time, please discuss this with your administration team.

Private health insurance

Icon has access to private health insurance with all health funds, and contracts with most major health funds. If we have a contract with your health fund, we can apply for your insurance pre-approval and process claims on your behalf. Your health fund will then send the payment directly to the centre to be credited to your account.

If you have an insurance excess, or a co-payment is needed, you will be provided with an estimate of treatment costs and payment required on the day of treatment.

We have access to private health insurance with all health funds

Your out-of-pocket treatment costs, if any, will depend on your health insurance policy level of cover. We will let you know if you have an insurance excess, or where a co-payment is needed, and provide you with a cost estimate

Doctor's fee for consultation on the same day as treatment will be charged directly to your health fund

If you do not have private health insurance we can organise a cost estimate for self-funded treatment



Doctor's fees

Your doctor's fee for consultation on the same day as treatment will be charged directly to your health fund. Most doctors do not charge a gap fee, however others may charge more than the Medicare Benefits Schedule [MBS], meaning you will be required to pay a gap fee depending on your level of cover. We will let you know in advance if you have any out-of-pocket costs.

Treatment fees

Your out-of-pocket treatment costs, if any, will depend on your health insurance policy level of cover.

There are no further out-of-pocket treatment costs for privately insured patients to those included in your health insurance policy.

Consumable fees

Dressings and bandages provided upon discharge will be invoiced separately by the day hospital. These items cannot be claimed for reimbursement either by Medicare or your health fund.

Fees from other providers

As part of your treatment you may receive services from other services providers. This may include:

- Pathology services [e.g. blood tests and bone marrow biopsy]
- Radiology services [e.g. x-rays and scans]

Our administration team can help you understand what service providers are involved in your care. For further information on these fees please contact the service provider directly.

Medication fees

While chemotherapy medicines are expensive, the cost of most people's treatment is subsidised by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme [PBS] and your private health insurance. However, most medicines that you take home with you after treatment may incur a patient contribution in line with the current PBS co-payment.

To ensure our pharmacy staff bill you correctly for your medication, please bring along, if applicable, your:

- Medicare card
- Concession, pension or DVA card [if applicable]
- Health insurance card
- Safety net entitlement card
- Prescription record form – these can be obtained from our on-site pharmacy, your local pharmacy, and will help you keep track of your prescription tally for the Pharmaceutical Safety Net. You'll need to have this form with you whenever you have a PBS medicine dispensed

Common terms

Many different cancer related terms will be used by doctors and nurses throughout your treatment.

While some may be familiar, knowing the precise meaning can give you, your family and loved ones, a better understanding of your diagnosis.

Acute Refers to symptoms that start and worsen quickly but do not last over a long period of time.

Benign Refers to a tumour that is not cancer. The tumour does not usually invade nearby tissue or spread to other parts of the body.

Bone marrow The soft, spongy tissue found in the centre of large bones where blood cells are formed.

Carcinoma Cancer that starts in skin or tissues that line the inside or cover the outside of internal organs.

Cells The basic units that make up the human body.

Chemotherapy Drugs that kill cancer cells.

Chronic Refers to a disease or condition that persists, often slowly, over a long period of time.

Invasive Cancer that has spread outside the layer of tissue in which it started and has the potential to grow into other parts of the body.

Leukaemia A cancer of the blood. Leukaemia begins when normal white blood cells change and grow uncontrollably.

Localised cancer Cancer that is confined to the area where it started and has not spread to other parts of the body.

Lymph nodes Tiny, bean-shaped organs that help fight infection. Part of the lymphatic system.

Lymphatic system A network of small vessels, ducts, and organs that carry fluid to and from the bloodstream and body tissues. Through the lymphatic system, cancer can spread to other parts of the body.

Lymphoma A cancer of the lymphatic system. Lymphoma begins when cells in the lymph system change and grow uncontrollably. Sometimes a tumour is formed.

Malignant Refers to a tumour that is cancerous. It may invade nearby healthy tissue or spread to other parts of the body.

Mass A lump in the body, can be cancer or benign.

Metastasis The spread of cancer from the place where the cancer began to another part of the body. Cancer cells can break away from the primary tumour and travel through the blood or the lymphatic system to the lymph nodes, brain, lungs, bones, liver, or other organs.

Primary cancer Describes the original cancer.

Prognosis Chance of recovery; a prediction of the outcome of a disease.

Sarcoma A cancer that develops in the tissues that support and connect the body, such as fat and muscle.

Secondary cancer Describes either a new primary cancer (a different type of cancer) that develops after treatment from the first type of cancer, or cancer that has spread to other parts of the body from the place where it started.

Stage A way of describing cancer, such as where it is located, whether or where it has spread, and whether it is affecting the functions of other organs in the body.

Tumour A mass formed when normal cells begin to change and grow uncontrollably. A tumour can be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous, meaning it can spread to other parts of the body). Also called a nodule or mass.

Treatment terms

Biopsy The removal of a small amount of tissue for examination under a microscope. Other tests can suggest that cancer is present, but only a biopsy can make a definite diagnosis.

Bone scan A scan which uses a small amount of radioactive material which produces a map of your bones. This is used to show any changes to their structure or make-up.

CT scan An x-ray machine using a computer to produce pictures of the head or body. It shows the soft tissues and bones in more detail than an ordinary x-ray.

Echocardiogram (ECHO)

An ultrasound of your heart.

Electrocardiogram (ECG) A recording of your heart's electrical activity.

GFR is a test performed that measures the function of your kidneys.

MRI A scanner which produces cross sectional soft tissue images of any area of your body.

Multi gated assessment (MUGA) A test of the heart designed to evaluate the function of the right and left ventricles.

Ultrasound Uses high frequency sound waves and a computer to produce pictures of most parts of the body.



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