



# Patient Information

## Information guide for patients with a Gastrointestinal Cancer

### Introduction

This information leaflet has been designed to introduce you to the role of a Gastrointestinal Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, the Gastrointestinal Cancer Team and answer some of the questions you may have. We recognise that being told that you have cancer can be a frightening and potentially confusing time for you and those closest to you. We also appreciate that this may be a time that you feel isolated, and that you may not know the best source of advice and help. We have written this guide to help you find the information you need.

Support, advice and guidance is offered to patients who have a cancer of the gastrointestinal tract, including cancers of the:

- Oesophagus
- Stomach
- Small Bowel
- Colon (Large Bowel)
- Rectum
- Anus
- Liver
- Pancreas
- Bile Ducts
- Gall Bladder

### Your Keyworker

When you are first given a diagnosis of a gastrointestinal cancer you will be assigned a Keyworker. This person will be a Gastrointestinal Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS). This person will be able to help co-ordinate your care and act as a central point of contact. There are four members in the Gastrointestinal Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist team and they work together to provide help with any concerns, queries or advice you or your loved ones may need.



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## What can the Gastrointestinal Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist Team offer me?

- Advice and support for you, your relatives, carers and friends.
- Information about your diagnosis and treatment plan as decided by the Multidisciplinary Team.
- Information about investigations and treatment such as biopsies, surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.
- Information about controlling symptoms such as pain, fatigue, nausea and weight loss.
- A link with the doctors and other health care professionals.
- Emotional support in dealing with your diagnosis.

## How can I contact the Gastrointestinal Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist Team?

Your Gastrointestinal Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist team can be contacted by telephone on either **01793 604338** or **01793 604483**.

They can also be contacted by email on [gwh.gionccnsteam@nhs.net](mailto:gwh.gionccnsteam@nhs.net)

Monday to Friday 8:30am until 4:30pm (not Bank Holidays or weekends).

The team are often away from their desks whilst they are with patients in the hospital. Please leave a message on the answerphone or send an email if they do not answer the phone and they will get back to you as soon as possible.

For Out of Hours medical queries please contact your Out of Hours GP or dial 111 for advice.

**Out of these hours and in an emergency dial 999.**

If you are a patient receiving chemotherapy please follow the instructions on your Chemotherapy Alert Card.

## For how long can I contact the Gastrointestinal Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist Team?

Your Clinical Nurse Specialist (Keyworker) will call you if they have information for you, but is not able to call you routinely to see how you are. However, at any time during your care and treatment, or even after your treatment has finished, you can contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist Team for advice.



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## The Multidisciplinary Team

### Who makes up the Multidisciplinary Team?

- Consultant Surgeons (doctors who perform operations).
- Consultant Oncologists (doctors who specialise in cancer and can prescribe chemotherapy and radiotherapy).
- Consultant Gastroenterologists (doctors who specialise in the digestive system and its disorders).
- Consultant Radiographers (healthcare professionals who perform x-rays, scans and biopsies to aid in the diagnosis of disease).
- Consultant Pathologist (doctors who interpret and diagnose the changes caused by disease in the body's cells and tissues).
- Clinical Nurse Specialists.
- Multidisciplinary Team Coordinator (administrator who coordinates the patients who need to be discussed at the meeting, types notes throughout the meeting and follows up actions decided on in the meeting).
- Patient Navigator (administrator who follows cancer patients' pathways and works to ensure that pathways run smoothly and that there are no unnecessary delays).

### What is the Multidisciplinary Team Meeting and when does it happen?

The Multidisciplinary Team meeting (often called MDT) happens every Friday morning and involves all of the above healthcare professionals. Every gastrointestinal cancer patient will be discussed at this meeting at diagnosis and then again during their pathway when treatment decisions need to be made.

Patients are not present during the meeting, but the Clinical Nurse Specialist Team are there and are happy to arrange to call you after the meeting to inform you what was discussed if you would like them to. If a new treatment plan is decided on during the meeting an appointment would then be made for a Consultant to meet with you as soon as possible to discuss this plan.

### Treatment at Other Hospitals

Sometimes during our Multidisciplinary Team Meeting a decision is made to refer our patients to another hospital for treatment or care. If this is needed you will be informed of this. We understand that it is not always convenient to travel to another hospital, but this decision will always be made in your best interest. Usually people are referred to another hospital because either they need a treatment which is not performed by any healthcare professionals at The Great Western Hospital or



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because they need an investigation or treatment on equipment that is not available at The Great Western Hospital. Your Clinical Nurse Specialist Team will be able to provide support and guidance if you are referred to another hospital and will be able to offer support and advice on matters such as the referral process, transportation concerns and specific treatment queries. Sometimes you will be given contact details for a new Keyworker at the hospital you are referred to, but you are still able to contact your Great Western Hospital Clinical Nurse Specialist Team.

## Financial Support

### Macmillan Citizens Advice Benefits Team

Financial issues can cause worry when someone becomes ill. You may be able to claim benefits to help you in your situation and you may also be able to apply for specific grants. The Macmillan Citizens Advice Benefits Advisors are extremely experienced in being able to offer advice and help completing forms. You can call the Advisors directly on **01793 496154**, or if you would like further information regarding this or would like to be referred to the service then please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist Team.

### Help with prescription costs

People living with cancer are entitled to free NHS prescriptions as long as they have a valid medical exemption certificate. This certificate can be used for five years, or until you turn 60 (when prescriptions become free for everyone). This certificate can only be used for NHS prescriptions and must be shown every time you pick up medication at the pharmacy. In England, prescriptions are free for people with cancer. Sometimes an exemption certificate can help with/or fully cover the cost of dental treatments and check-ups as well as sight and hearing tests. If you currently pay for your prescriptions then please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist Team who can help you to apply for a medical exemption certificate.

## Healthcare Support Services

### Macmillan Gastro-Intestinal Dietician Team

The dieticians can provide expert advice and support regarding a balanced diet and help with increasing calorie intake or maintain a goal weight. They can also assess your need for supplements and help to organise, order and supply these. If you would like further information regarding this or feel that you would benefit from being



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referred to the team please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist Team so that this can be discussed.

## Emotional Support

We recognise that a cancer diagnosis can often have a psychological impact on both you and your family and friends. If you and your loved ones are struggling with mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, depression and relationship problems then please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist Team so that we can talk through the best way to get you the right support.

- Your GP is often a good source of support when you are suffering with mental health issues and making an appointment to see them is often a good first step.
- At The Great Western Hospital we have a Clinical Psychology Team who we can refer you to.
- You can self-refer to Lift Psychology for free support. Telephone 01793 836836 or email [lift.psychology@nhs.net](mailto:lift.psychology@nhs.net)
- You can self-refer to Relate who offer six free sessions for people with a cancer diagnosis. Find more information at [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)
- Cancer support groups are available in this area. Some of these are directly linked to the type of cancer that you have and some are more general support groups. If you would be interested in joining a support group, please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist Team.

## The Palliative Care Team

For some patients, following discussion with yourself and your family, it may be that your care is shared with the Palliative Care Team. The Palliative Care Team are experts in symptom control and management and many patients find their help invaluable. The Palliative Care Team also have the advantage of being able to care for patients at home, at their hospice, in hospital and in care homes. They also run a programme of courses for patients to help them cope with their illness, and offer specialist support to their families and carers. Your Clinical Nurse Specialist Team will talk with you about a referral to Palliative Care if they think this is appropriate and, if you wish, you can also raise this with them.

## Macmillan Cancer Support

Macmillan cancer support can provide physical, financial and emotional support to help people live life as fully as they can. Macmillan offer a wide range of online support but also provide a wide variety of information booklets. These booklets can be provided in braille, in other languages, easy read format and large font. They also



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provide a free telephone support line seven days a week from 8am-8pm on **0808 808 00 00**.

## Useful websites

There are many ways of finding out more about cancer and effective ways of treating it. There is a lot of information on the internet, however, you should be very careful when selecting sources as not all provide good reliable information.

Below is a list of recommended websites.

**Please note that some of the below sources are for specific cancer sites.**

- The NHS Website  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- Macmillan  
[www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)
- Cancer Research UK  
[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)
- Penny Brohn UK  
[www.pennybrohn.org.uk](http://www.pennybrohn.org.uk)
- Maggie's  
[www.maggiescentres.org](http://www.maggiescentres.org)
- Mummy's Star (supporting pregnancy through cancer and beyond)  
[www.mummysstar.org](http://www.mummysstar.org)
- Bowel Cancer UK (specific to bowel, rectal and anal cancers).  
[www.bowelcancer.org.uk](http://www.bowelcancer.org.uk)
- Pancreatic Cancer UK (specific to pancreatic cancer).  
[www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk](http://www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk)
- OOSO (specific to oesophageal and stomach cancer).  
[www.ooso.org.uk](http://www.ooso.org.uk)
- British Liver Trust (specific to liver cancer).  
[www.britishlivertrust.org.uk](http://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk)

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

**This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email [gwh.pals@nhs.net](mailto:gwh.pals@nhs.net)**

### Document Control

Division: Clinical Support & Specialist Services  
Department: Cancer Services  
Approved Date: 4 March 2020  
Next Review Date: April 2023  
Document Number: CS&SS - PIL0002