

Information for patients and carers

Neutropenic Sepsis

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue. The top band is a light blue, the middle is a medium blue, and the bottom is a dark blue.

What is neutropenia?

Neutropenia is where there is a decrease in the number of circulating neutrophils in the bloodstream and is a common complication of chemotherapy.

What are neutrophils?

Neutrophils are produced in the bone marrow and circulate in the blood. They are a type of white blood cell that responds to infections and attacks bacteria and other foreign invaders directly.

If your neutrophils do decrease, then your risk of infection increases, this is why we ask you to:

- Avoid contact with anyone who has an obvious infection.
- Avoid unpasteurised milk and cheese.
- Avoid raw and undercooked eggs.
- Avoid undercooked food.
- Wash your hands before you prepare and eat food.
- Wash your hands after handling animals, fresh flowers, or pot plants.
- Clean your teeth regularly.

What should I be looking for?

Signs of infection such as:

- A temperature of 38.0°C or above.
- Uncontrollable shivering, chills or shaking.
- A sore throat.
- Diarrhoea.
- A cough or shortness of breath.

- Discomfort or burning when you pass urine.
- Signs of confusion.
- Or if you just do not feel 'well'.

What do I do next?

It is important that you contact the 24-hour oncology helpline for advice, as you may have developed neutropenic sepsis.

This is where your neutrophils are low and you have developed an infection, which is a serious, potentially life-threatening condition.

Once you have contacted the oncology helpline about your symptoms you will be advised to attend the hospital for assessment.

The nurse taking your call will advise you where you need to go.

What can I expect once I arrive at the hospital?

Once you arrive in hospital, you can expect:

- Bloods to be taken to assess your neutrophil count.
- Antibiotics to be administered within 60 minutes of arrival to hospital.
- Once you have been fully assessed, you may be able to go home. This will depend on your blood results and how you feel. If the decision is made for you to stay in hospital, then you will be reviewed by the Acute Oncology Team

The most efficient way to treat neutropenic sepsis is to recognise the signs and symptoms early and ensure that appropriate antibiotics are given within 60 minutes of arriving at the hospital.

It is important to:

- Recognise and acknowledge if you are feeling unwell.
- Take your temperature if you feel unwell.
- Contact the 24-hour oncology helpline.

Contact details.

IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS, YOU MUST NOT WAIT, RING THE ONCOLOGY HELPLINE.

The 24-hour oncology helpline is available on:

01772 523205

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

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**Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.
This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

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