

Chemotherapy services at the Cancer Centre at Guy's

This leaflet aims to give you an overview of chemotherapy services at the Cancer Centre at Guy's. Chemotherapy services are delivered in two areas:

- Chemotherapy Village
- Outpatients Village

If you have any questions that this leaflet does not answer, please speak to a member of the nursing team.

Your outpatient appointments

Before each chemotherapy treatment you will visit the Outpatients Village or the Chemotherapy Village for an assessment. All patients need to check in first at the Welcome Village on the ground floor of the Cancer Centre at Guy's. Please bring your appointment letter with you and use the electronic check-in screens in the Welcome Village. You can ask a member of staff if you have any questions.

If your appointment is in the Outpatients Village, you will need to check in again using the check-in screens when you arrive there. After you have checked in, please wait for your name to appear on the electronic call-forward screen. If your appointment is in the Chemotherapy Village, a receptionist will welcome you and ask you to take a seat. Your appointment will take place a few days before your chemotherapy session. At the assessment you will:

- **Have a blood test** – chemotherapy can affect healthy blood cells as well as cancer cells, so it is important to make sure you have enough healthy blood cells before having more treatment.
- **See your clinical team** – they will assess whether you are well enough to have chemotherapy. You will be asked how you are feeling and about any side effects your treatment may be causing. Sometimes it is helpful to make a list of your side effects in advance along with any questions you would like to ask before coming to your appointment. You can use your **Appointment Card and Symptom Diary** to do this.
- **Be weighed** – weight changes are common during chemotherapy. We monitor your weight so that we know if it is changing. It also helps your clinical team make sure they give you the correct amount (dose) of chemotherapy.

If you are likely to have a physical examination, it can be a good idea for women to wear a top and a skirt or trousers. This is so that you do not have to take all your clothes off for the examination. If you need to have a physical examination, a chaperone will usually be present. If not, please ask for one.

Guy's and St Thomas' is a teaching hospital, which means that nursing and medical students attend the hospital as part of their learning. A member of the hospital team will ask your permission for any student to be present during your consultation. If you would prefer that a student was not there, please tell us. We will respect your wishes at all times and your decision will not affect the care you receive.

What are the opening times?

The unit is open Monday to Friday, 8am until 6.30pm, except bank holidays.

What should I do if I cannot make my appointment?

Please tell a member of your hospital team as soon as possible. It is important that you find another time to come to clinic so as to prevent any unnecessary delays to your treatment. To cancel your appointment and/or make another one, please call the numbers on your treatment card or email OncologyAppointmentCancellations@gstt.nhs.uk.

How long will my appointment take?

Your appointment should last around 20-30 minutes.

Patients are seen in order of appointment time and not the time they arrive. The oncology clinics can be quite busy especially after bank holidays. We aim to see all patients at their appointed times. However, as a major teaching hospital we sometimes have to prioritise urgent and complicated cases and this can lead to delays. We advise that you do not schedule any other appointments on the morning or afternoon of your appointment.

Sometimes you may need tests like an x-ray or a scan. Your medical team might also ask you to see more than one person during your appointment. We will always aim to ensure your waiting time is as short as possible but please be reassured that every effort is being made to improve the service we offer you.

Your doctor/nurse will tell you how you will be given any test results. Sometimes this is by phone, but they might be given at your next appointment.

If you feel unwell when you arrive in the department, please let the nursing staff know. The nurses in the clinic are all there to help.

Clinical research trials

As a cancer centre in a large teaching hospital we are always doing our best to improve care for patients. One important way that we do this is through clinical trials. Clinical trials are used to test how well treatments are working and what effect cancer and the treatments available for cancer can have on a person's quality of life.

When you come for your clinic appointment your doctor may suggest joining a clinical trial as part of your treatment. If you choose to consider this, a research nurse will spend time explaining the trial in more detail. They will also answer any questions you may have.

Taking part in a trial is voluntary. If you decide not to join, it will not affect your future treatment. For more information on joining clinical trials or cancer research in general, please talk to a member of your clinical team. For general enquiries about trials, please call the Cancer Research UK helpline on ☐ **0808 800 4040**.

Visiting the Chemotherapy Village for your chemotherapy treatment

The Chemotherapy Village is a specially designed area for chemotherapy and anti-cancer drug treatments. The unit treats various types of cancers, and is located on levels C and C1 in the Cancer Centre at Guy's.

When you arrive at the Chemotherapy Village please report to reception and hand in your appointment card. Arriving early to your appointment will not mean that you will have your chemotherapy earlier as all appointments are carefully allocated to ensure that a chair is free and that a nurse is available to treat you.

Visits to the Chemotherapy Village can be lengthy. The chemotherapy nurses will be able to let you know how long your treatment is likely to take. Please remember that there can occasionally be unavoidable delays which may mean that your treatment takes longer.

Opening times

The unit is open 8am to 6.30pm, Monday to Friday. We are open on bank holidays for some treatments.

What should I do if I cannot make my appointment?

Please tell a member of your hospital team as soon as possible. It is important that you find another time to come to the unit so as to prevent any unnecessary delays to your treatment. To speak to someone, please call Chemotherapy appointments on 020 7188 6452 or email ChemoEnquiries@gstt.nhs.uk.

Who can I ask for further information?

Nurses working in the Chemotherapy Village have had specialist training. A few days before your first treatment, a chemotherapy nurse will explain more about your treatment, including the chemotherapy drugs you have been prescribed and how to get information, advice and support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you have any questions, please ask.

Dimbleby Cancer Care has an information service located in the Welcome Village (level W) of the Cancer Centre. If you would like to know more about the type of cancer you have, or about your treatment, visit the information centre and speak to a cancer information nurse specialist.

Your chemotherapy dose

Chemotherapy is tailor-made for you. Your chemotherapy dose is calculated by your height and weight at the beginning of treatment. We will monitor your weight throughout your chemotherapy treatment so that you continue to get the right dose. Depending on your blood test results and your assessment, your clinical team may need to adjust the doses of your drugs to find the right level of treatment for you.

All chemotherapy doses are checked by trained pharmacists before being supplied to the nurses.

Before you go home

Your chemotherapy nurse will give you any medications your team have prescribed for you, and will explain how and when you should take them. These include anti-sickness medications. If necessary, the receptionist will book your next review with the doctor and your next treatment appointments.

What if I become unwell after chemotherapy?

If you are experiencing any side effects from your treatment or are feeling unwell, please contact Acute Oncology by calling **020 7188 3754** at any time. From 6.15pm-8.30am, and at weekends, calls will be directed to the switchboard and you can ask to speak to the on-call doctor.

If you become unwell during your treatment you may be assessed and treated in Acute Oncology before being sent home or, if necessary, you may be admitted to hospital. If you have been asked to attend Acute Oncology, there is no need to check in at the Welcome Village on the ground floor – just head straight to the Chemotherapy Village.

Patient tips

The following top tips have been put together by previous or current patients for new patients having chemotherapy for the first time:

Eating and drinking:

- Don't have your favourite meal on the day of treatment – some chemotherapy drugs can make food taste different.
- Do have meals in the freezer or ready meals that don't require any effort if you will be alone.
- Eat little and often, rather than having three or four bigger meals.
- Always carry a couple of small snacks you really like with you.
- The Chemotherapy Village has a free trolley service for patients which offers sandwiches and snacks. Free hot and cold drinks are available for everyone all day in the unit. There are also several cafés available in the hospital and the local area.
- When treatment finishes your normal taste will most likely come back but it may take weeks or even months. Don't worry about it – just eat whatever you can.
- Refer to the **Dietary advice during chemotherapy** patient information leaflet.

Managing side effects:

- Wear comfortable shoes. Some chemotherapy makes your hands and feet very sensitive, and you may find that you need a larger size in shoes or something with a thicker sole or with insoles if you are going to walk over rough ground.
- A dry mouth can be helped by chewing sugar-free gum. A ginger and lemon drink can freshen a dry mouth, but miss out the lemon if your mouth is sore.
- If you get mouth ulcers, an alcohol-free mouthwash can really help and can be prescribed for you.
- Take the anti-sickness drugs as directed. Take them before you are sick, as they can prevent the sickness altogether. If the first anti-sickness drug you are given doesn't help, call the acute oncology service and an alternative can be given.
- Yes, chemotherapy can affect your memory. It's not you! Write yourself reminders, ask people to repeat themselves if you've forgotten already, and make lists, lists and more lists!

Activity and rest:

- Bring your own entertainment with you when you come for your treatment. A book, a magazine, a newspaper, puzzles will all help the time to pass more quickly. You could load your mobile device with talking books as well as music, for those times when even reading is too much effort.

- Get used to asking other people to do some things for you, and when you're feeling better, the habit might have stuck – for them as well as you!
- Try to get out and walk every day. You'll feel more positive and energised and in contact with the normal world outside.
- Plan some nice activities, but rest well before and after – don't feel guilty about having an afternoon nap!

General tips:

- If you don't know, always ask. Whatever it is, there's lots of help and information around.
- Try to arrange treats for yourself in between treatments so there is always something to look forward to.
- You may want to 'put on a brave face' to loved ones, but it's good to have one person (a good friend or a counsellor) to whom you can be really honest.
- Everything will hopefully get back to normal after your treatment ends but don't expect too much from yourself, especially at first.
- Remember that everyone is different – and no cancer patient is the same. Your experience of cancer will be unique to you and your reaction to the treatments will not be the same as anyone else's.

Why not get involved and use your experience to help make a difference?

The Chemotherapy Patient Working Group (CPWG) is a group of chemotherapy patients, carers and health professionals who use their experiences to help make a difference to the care provided at Guy's and St Thomas'. The group acts as a forum to identify areas where improvements could be made, and to provide feedback on challenges, issues and ideas brought by the chemotherapy team.

The group meets regularly at Guy's and meetings include lunch.

The CPWG had major input into the design of the Cancer Centre at Guy's. Members have been working on tips for chemotherapy patients for this leaflet, and are involved in staff training as well as planning for the new centre. If you are interested in finding out more about the group or would like to join, please contact Dimbleby Cancer Care on 020 7188 5918.

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the clinical nurse specialist or other member of staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, and to become a member:

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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