

**Patient  
Information**

# Septicaemia risk to chemotherapy and haematology patients

## Information for the GP

PAS Label
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Dear Doctor

Re: \_\_\_\_\_

The above named patient will be starting a course of chemotherapy for:

\_\_\_\_\_

On (date): \_\_\_\_\_

This comprises of the following chemotherapy drugs and supportive medication:

Acronym:

Reference No.

**GHPI0805\_12\_15**

Department

**Oncology**

Review due

**December 2018**

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Each cycle of treatment will normally be given every \_\_\_\_\_ days.

On day (s) \_\_\_\_\_

If steroids form part of the regime, their use is intermittent, and the prescription should **not** be repeated automatically.

**Oncology, haematology consultant's name:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Septicaemia risk to chemotherapy patients**

During the whole of this treatment programme, the patient's immunity may be depressed and the white cell count may fall profoundly.

Your patient has been told to seek urgent medical advice from the Chemotherapy Helpline. The patient will be admitted immediately if there are signs of sepsis or any clinical concerns.

**Neutropenic sepsis**

This can present initially as:

- Trivial malaise
- Sore throat
- High temperature (more than 37.5°C)
- Low temperature (less than 36°C)
- Shortness of breath/hyperventilation
- Abdominal pain
- Shivering, shaking attacks, symptoms of cold and flu
- Headache unresponsive to paracetamol.

**If deaths are to be avoided it is essential to take apparently minor illness very seriously. Such patients should be admitted for investigations, blood cultures, intravenous fluids and antibiotics.**

**Patient  
Information****Thrombocytopenia may also occur**

This may become sufficiently severe to cause bleeding. If this is the case, early admission is essential.

**Additional risks to septicaemia**

Patients receiving chemotherapy may also present with:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Stomatitis, mucositis
- Indications of past cannula extravasations
- Central venous catheter Infection, thrombosis or displacement.

In these circumstances advice should be sought via the:

**Chemotherapy Helpline (24 hour)**

Tel: 0300 422 3444

An information sheet is given to patients during their pre-chemotherapy talk which gives the Chemotherapy Helpline contact number and information regarding side effects.

Patients may be asked to contact their GP for symptom control if this is deemed appropriate by the Chemotherapy Helpline.

**Contact information**

If you think your patient has signs and symptoms of sepsis, please contact the Chemotherapy Helpline immediately.

**Chemotherapy Helpline (24 hour)**

**Tel: 0300 422 3444**

If this number is unobtainable, please go through to the switchboard at Gloucestershire Hospitals Tel: 0300 422 2222 and ask for the on-call oncology or haematology doctor.

Please note that if your patient attends the **Edward Jenner Unit, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital** please contact the unit on:

**Edward Jenner Unit**

Tel: 0300 422 5299

Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:00pm

Out of these hours please contact the Chemotherapy Helpline.

Content reviewed: December 2015