

Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression Due to Cancer

Spinal Cord Compression

Sometimes when people have cancer it can spread to the spinal column and cause the spinal nerves to be squeezed.

This leaflet is not intended to scare you, but to help you recognise the important symptoms and to report early so that tests and treatment may be done as soon as possible.

When spinal nerves are squeezed it can cause damage to the spinal cord to the point of complete paralysis from the neck, chest or waist down.

This is quite rare, and unlikely to affect you, but is very important to pick it up quickly as the earlier the treatments are started the better the result usually is.

Symptoms to watch out for:

- Back pain in one part of your spine that is severe, distressing or different from your usual pain (especially if it affects the upper spine or neck).
- Severe increasing pain in the spine that changes with lying down or standing up, when lifting or straining, wakes you at night or prevents sleep.
- Pain which starts in the spine and goes down the chest abdomen (tummy).
- Pain down leg or arm.
- A new feeling of clumsiness or weakness of the arms or legs or difficulty walking.
- Numbness in the arms or legs.
- Difficulty in controlling your water or bowels.

If you have any of these symptoms:

- Speak with a doctor, nurse or paramedic as soon as possible (definitely within 24 hours).
- Tell them that you have cancer, are worried about your spine and would like to see a doctor.
- Show the doctor, nurse or paramedic this leaflet.
- Try to bend your back as little as possible.

For the doctor or healthcare professional:

- This patient has cancer and is therefore at risk of metastatic spinal cord compression (MSCC).
- If they have any of the symptoms listed then please consider MSCC as a possible diagnosis and discuss further management with their consultant oncologist (number below) or contact the out of hours team for advice.

Consultant oncologist/ haematologist:

Telephone number:

General Practitioner (GP):

Telephone number:

Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)/ Palliative Care Nurse/ Key Worker:

Telephone number:

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day. If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.

For additional medical advice, if your symptoms or condition worsens:

Contact your GP

NHS 111:

Get help with your symptoms, NHS111:

Information to help you manage your health:

Telephone 111

<https://111.nhs.uk/>

www.nhs.uk

In an emergency telephone 999

Emergency Department (A&E)
Alexandra Hospital
Woodrow Drive
Redditch B98 7UB

Minor Injury Unit
Kidderminster Hospital
Bewdley Road
Kidderminster DY11 6RJ

Emergency Department (A&E)
Worcestershire Royal Hospital
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester WR5 1DD

Tel: 01527 512030

Tel: 01562 513039

Tel: 01905 760743

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