



Receiving Cancer Care at CHS

Supporting your
cancer journey



Canberra
Health
Services



ACT
Government

Receiving **Cancer Care**



Receiving a cancer diagnosis can be a difficult time. Finding out you have cancer and starting treatment may happen quickly and can be overwhelming. Canberra Health Services (CHS) provides a range of cancer services as well as support and counselling to guide you through the process.

Whether you're a day or overnight patient, this guide includes information about your cancer care. You will find information about tests, treatment options, services and how to contact us.

Look out for 'A Patient and Carer's Guide to Canberra Hospital', where you'll find more detailed information about parking, visiting hours and other on-site facilities. If you haven't received a copy, ask any member of your care team or see our staff at Canberra Region Cancer Centre's main reception desk (Building 19, Level 1).



More information

We offer a range of services for cancer care. Scan the QR code with your mobile phone to see the list on our website.



www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/services-and-clinics/cancer-services



Acknowledgement of Country



Canberra Health Services acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT and recognises any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and contribution to the life of this region.



Accessibility: How to get this information in other ways.

To get this information:

- in large print
- to listen to
- in any other format
- call (02) 5124 0000**



If you need the translating and interpreting service

call 131 450

canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/accessibility

Contents

Cancer Care

Your care team	8
Treatment options	12
Scans and tests	13

Before coming for treatment

Things to think about before coming for treatment	16
Preparing for chemotherapy	18
Preparing for radiation therapy	20

During and after your treatment

Day patients	24
Staying overnight	26
Care and support close to home	29
What to do if you need urgent medical care	30
Will I have to pay?	32

Cancer Care



Your care team



Your care team are a group of health professionals who will care for you throughout your cancer journey. These professions include:

Oncologists are specialist doctors who diagnose and treat cancer. Your oncologist will often be your main doctor who organises your treatment and can refer you to other specialist doctors for treatment in different fields. Involved in your care, you may have a Radiation Oncologist and/or a Medical Oncologist.

— **Radiation Oncologists** specialise in treating cancer with radiation therapy techniques.

They are supported by Radiation Therapists, who ensure the radiation treatment is delivered accurately and safely.

— **Medical Oncologists** specialise in treating cancer with medicines like chemotherapy, hormone therapy and immunotherapy.

Haematologists diagnose and treat blood-related cancers.

Cancer Supportive Care Team includes Cancer Specialist Nurses (also known as Cancer Care Coordinators) and our Cancer Psychosocial Specialists. This team provides services to meet your physical, emotional, social, psychological, educational, spiritual and practical needs during all phases of the cancer journey.

- **Cancer Specialist Nurses** have in-depth knowledge about specific cancers and provide diagnosis, treatment, support, education and information to you and your family.
- **Cancer Psychosocial Specialists** can help with support information and referrals for financial issues, transport needs and practical support.

Our Cancer Psychosocial Specialists are also available for counselling and emotional support for the psychosocial impact of cancer. They are also able to organise and facilitate family meetings.

Nurses look after your overall wellness and help you with your chemotherapy treatment and managing side effects. They may have an assistant in nursing (AIN) helping them.

Your care team may also include allied health professionals, such as:

Radiologists take images and scans, and check for problems or changes in your results.

Pathologists are specialist doctors and scientists who test blood, urine and cell samples to help diagnose illness.

Pharmacists prepare medicines and scripts.

Genetic counsellors can help you understand your hereditary risk of cancer.

Physiotherapists help you to move, get stronger and improve your coordination after illness or surgery.

Occupational therapists help you improve how you do everyday things like having a shower or going to the toilet. They can also help arrange modifications to your home if needed.

Exercise physiologists help you manage your health conditions through physical activity and exercise programs.

Speech pathologists help you with talking and swallowing.

Dietitians offer advice on how to eat well when you are having cancer treatment. They can provide you with a diet plan to promote your recovery.



Your care is also supported by administration and support teams who keep the service running day-to-day and can also point you in the right direction if you have questions about appointments, or about how to get in touch with your clinical care team.



My care team:

Write the names of your care team here.

Oncologist:

Cancer Specialist Nurse:

Cancer Psychosocial Specialists:

Physiotherapist:

Occupational therapist:

Speech pathologist:

Dietitian:

Exercise physiologist:

You can ask your Cancer Specialist Nurse if you would like to talk to someone in your care team.

Treatment options



We will talk with you about your treatment options. What your doctor recommends will depend on:

- the type and stage of cancer you have
- your physical and emotional wellbeing
- your personal preferences.

You are welcome to have anyone you wish to be part of these conversations.

Your oncologist and care team will give you more detailed information about treatment options that may be suitable for you.

Scans and tests



Your care team may arrange for you to have scans and tests to help your diagnosis. The results provide your care team with important information, like:

- the type of cancer
- the size of the cancer
- whether cancer cells have spread to other parts of your body
- how the cancer is responding to treatment.

Your doctor or nurse will tell you why you need the test, if there is a cost and when the results are likely to be available. You may need to arrange someone to take you home after the scan or test.

Before
coming for
treatment



Things to think about before coming for treatment

If you come to the Canberra Region Cancer Centre for day treatment, such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy, you might like to:

Bring a support person

You are welcome to bring a support person to help you make medical decisions or provide comfort and company while you receive treatment.

Wear comfortable clothing

If you are coming for treatment or need to have a blood test, wear something that will allow access to your arm.

Plan how to get home

You might like to arrange for a friend or family member to drive you.

If you need help arranging transport, you can talk to your oncology social worker about community transport options.

Questions and concerns



It is normal to have questions, concerns or feel overwhelmed about starting treatment. We will offer you a private education session before you start.

We will give you information about your treatment and any potential side effects. You may like to share this with family, carers, or a support person who can help you plan and prepare.

You'll also be informed about support services available through Canberra Health Services and in the community. If you don't have someone to help you prepare, let us know and we can arrange support for you via our Cancer Supportive Care Team.

Preparing for chemotherapy



Chemotherapy education

In this one-hour appointment, a chemotherapy nurse will help you understand:

- how chemotherapy works, potential side effects and how to manage them
- chemotherapy precautions at home
- self-management advice such as nutrition and exercise.



What to bring

Chemotherapy sessions can take a long time. You may like to bring some of your own comfort items. Here are some suggestions:

- A pillow or blanket.
We can provide you with a pillow and blanket, but some people prefer to bring their own.
- Something to keep your head warm, such as a beanie or head scarf.
- Books, a tablet or other entertainment to keep you occupied during your treatment. Pack headphones if you want to listen to audio on your personal device.
- Personal items, such as lip balm, eye mask, warm socks or slippers with non-slip soles to prevent falls.
- Snacks. Our staff and volunteers will arrange a meal, drinks and snacks, but you may wish to bring something extra.

Preparing for radiation therapy



Radiation therapy education

Our radiation oncology care team will help you understand:

- how radiation therapy works
- potential side effects and how to manage them
- skin care during and after treatment
- self-management advice such as nutrition and exercise.

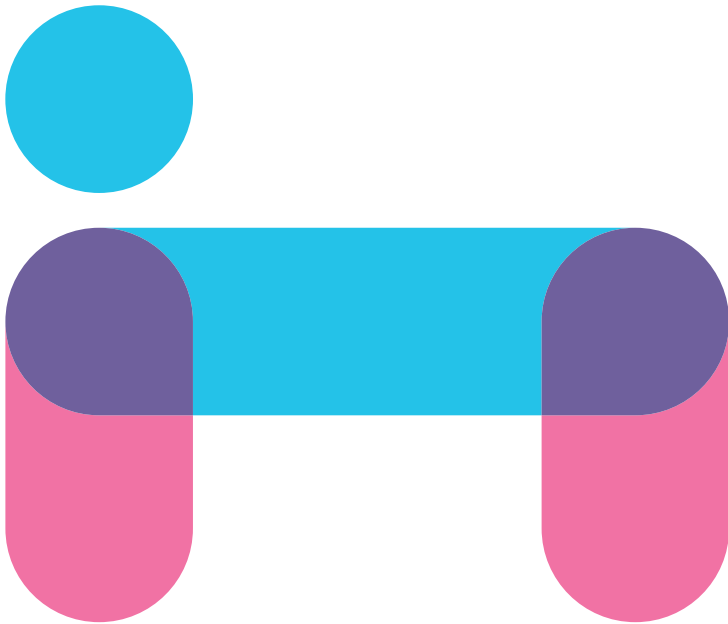


What to bring

Wear comfy, easily removable clothes. We will give you a private space to change into a hospital gown before your treatment.

Some people like to bring soothing skin cream or moisturiser for after treatment. Your care team can give you advice on suitable creams.

During and **after** your treatment



Day patients

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy and infusions are given while you are in a recliner chair so you are seated and comfortable during treatment. We can give you a warm blanket if you are feeling cold.

Our volunteers are on hand to arrange a meal or drinks and a snack.

Chemotherapy safety

Chemotherapy is strong medicine, so our nurses and doctors may wear protective equipment like gloves, goggles, gowns or masks to limit their exposure to chemotherapy medicine.

The chemotherapy medicine may stay in your body for up to a week. Your chemotherapy nurse will talk to you more about safety precautions whilst you are having treatment.

Radiation therapy

Radiation therapy sessions are generally quick, usually lasting only 10 — 30 minutes.

During treatment, you will be able to listen to music and communicate with the Radiation Therapists delivering your treatment.



Staying overnight

Your ward

We have two cancer wards for patients staying overnight. These are wards 14A and 14B.

We do our best to have you admitted to one of our wards, however this is not always possible. If you are admitted to a different ward, you will still be cared for by specialist oncology / haematology or radiation oncology doctors.

Family friendly space

The wards share a dining area and an outdoor courtyard where you can spend time with loved ones. The rooms also have day beds to ensure your family and friends are comfortable when they visit.

Keeping airborne bacteria away

Ward 14A is positively pressured. This means air flows out of the ward, not in, which keeps away airborne bacteria. This reduces the risk of infection to immune-suppressed patients. It also means you will be able to walk freely around the ward.

Important paperwork

With your permission, we will send your GP a copy of your discharge summary. This letter provides the GP information about your stay in hospital, as well as details of any follow-up care you may need.

It is important for your GP to know about your hospital stay so they can understand changes in your health and give you the best care.



More information

We have more information about how to prepare, what to bring and what to expect during your stay in our 'A Patient and Carer's Guide to Canberra Hospital'. If you haven't received a copy, ask any member of your care team or see our staff at Canberra Region Cancer Centre's main reception desk (Building 19, Level 1).

Medications and pharmacy scripts



If we have given you a script, you will need to take it to your local pharmacy to be filled. Your GP may also give you scripts at your next GP appointment.



It is important to take the medications as prescribed. If you have any questions about your medication, ask your oncologist.

Care and support close to home



We have services and clinics in the community which we may refer you to. Our Cancer Supportive Care Services Team can help with any community service referrals you might need after treatment.

We can provide counselling at several of our facilities around Canberra.

You can contact the team

Monday — Friday,

8.30am — 5pm

by calling (02) 5124 1221

or send an email to

cancercounselling@act.gov.au

Our Cancer Wellbeing Space can help you with the transition to life after cancer treatment. Search our website for more information.

Cancer Council ACT can provide information about a range of support services for people affected by cancer in your local area. You may find this helpful during and after your treatment.

What to do if you need urgent medical care



Rapid Assessment Unit

The Cancer Rapid Assessment Unit is an alternative to attending the emergency department if you need urgent care related to your cancer diagnosis or treatment.

It is open **Monday — Friday, 8.30am — 5.30pm.**

To access the service, call the 24-hour triage line on **(02) 5124 4401** and a nurse will answer your call.

If we ask you to come in to be assessed, you can find us in the Radiation Oncology area at Canberra Hospital's Cancer Region Cancer Centre, Building 19, Level 1. When you arrive check in with us at Radiation Oncology Reception.

Our Cancer Rapid Assessment Unit is run by nurse practitioners and nurses. They can order any tests and start your treatment.

This may include:

- giving you a prescription for medicine to take home, or
- recommending you be admitted to hospital, which our staff will arrange.

Will I have to pay?

As a public patient, you will not have to pay for your treatment or stay if:

- you have a Medicare card
- your treatment is clinically necessary.

You will have to pay for your care if:

- you are not a permanent Australian resident/citizen or from a country that holds a reciprocal health care agreement with Australia
- you are visiting Australia on a student visa
- your treatment is not covered by Medicare.

Your doctor may suggest a medicine or treatment that is not on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). This is because cancer treatments evolve rapidly and sometimes effective medicines, while approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), have not yet been listed on the PBS. This means you may need to pay for your medicine or treatment.

Your doctor may suggest a diagnostic test that is not fully covered by Medicare. This means you may need to pay for your diagnostic test. Your doctor will talk through the options with you, including alternatives. Your doctor should give you an estimate of any costs associated with your treatment.



As a private patient, it is your responsibility to check if you have enough health care insurance to cover your hospital charges.

Funding your treatment

There may be options to cover the cost of treatments that are not otherwise funded. Speak to your social worker about these options.



More financial assistance information is available at:

- Cancer Council www.cancer.org.au
- Cancer Australia www.canceraustralia.gov.au
- Rise Above Capital Region Cancer Relief www.riseabovecbr.org.au



More information

For more information about payments you can scan the QR code to visit our website or talk to our Patient Accounts team on (02) 6207 6131.



www.canberrahealthservices.act.gov.au/before,-during-and-after-your-care/coming-for-cancer-treatment/before-you-arrive/will-i-have-to-pay-for-my-cancer-care



How to provide feedback to Canberra Health Services



If you have concerns or questions about your care, talk to any member of your care team or ask to speak to the Nurse in Charge or a Senior Manager.

If you would like to provide feedback about our services, contact the Consumer Feedback and Engagement team (02) 5124 5932 or HealthFeedback@act.gov.au

