

Other symptoms



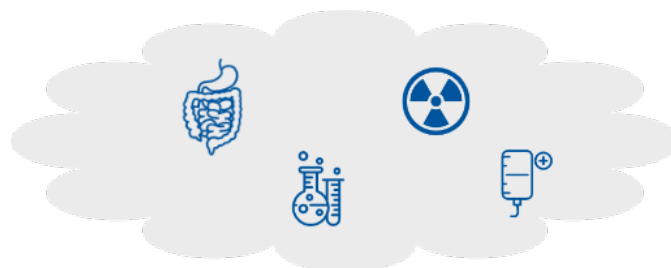
“After I started chemo, I began to notice all these little things—like tingling in my fingers, itchy skin, hot feet and cold sores—which didn’t seem like much, and I began to wonder if I was becoming a bit of a hypochondriac. But I made a list and showed it to my doctor. I was pleasantly surprised when, far from rolling his eyes, he went through the list and took it all very seriously.”

Lucas
Diagnosed with melanoma

What are other cancer-related symptoms?

Everyone has different responses to cancer and cancer treatment. The symptoms, or side-effects, that you have might not be the most common ones.

- **How does it affect me?** You may question if a symptom is related to your cancer or cancer treatment. It is normal to question the cause of a symptom. You may also want to know how this symptom or its management will affect your cancer treatment.
- **Does it get better?** Depending on the symptom, there may be strategies to manage it that will either make the symptom disappear, or lessen its effect.



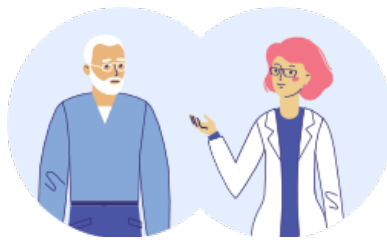
What causes symptoms?

Cancer can cause changes in your body. For example, it may affect your body’s chemical balance. Or it may stop your body’s systems from working as well as they normally would. These changes can then cause symptoms. The treatment for your cancer, like chemotherapy or radiation therapy, can also cause unwanted symptoms.



What are the signs of symptoms?

Signs of cancer or treatment-related symptoms can be specific to you. Everyone has different physical reactions to cancer and its treatment—both in terms of side-effects and how to manage them. Signs can vary from cold sores or vomiting, to itching or heartburn.



When should I get help for my symptom?

It would be a good idea to talk to your oncologist, nurse, or pivot nurse at your next appointment if any of the following situations are true for you (For more information see [Talking to your healthcare professional about your symptoms or concerns](#)):

- You are worried that a symptom is not “normal”
- You need help treating the symptom
- You want to know if and when it goes away, will it return?



Talk to someone in your healthcare team immediately if:

- You think the symptom keeps getting worse
- You are unable to manage your daily activities
- You are in pain

What can I do to help manage my symptom?

Here are some strategies to help you manage your cancer-related symptom. It is important that you let your healthcare team know about any new symptoms. They may give your healthcare team important information about your cancer or treatment. You don't want a small symptom to grow into a bigger one. Don't be shy—you are not bothering them!



Keep a symptom diary

A symptom diary can be very helpful to show to your healthcare team. It can help them understand your symptom to help you figure out how to manage it.

- When did it start?
- What brings it on?
- What does it feel like?
- Can you do your usual activities?
- What makes it worse?
- Keep track of anything you've done to relieve the problem and what works
- For more information see [Symptom Diary](#).



Get support

Speaking to others with the same cancer, or who have undergone the same treatment, can give you tips for side-effect/symptom management. Be cautious about using the Internet for self-diagnosis – information can be wrong or not speak to your experience. Good websites to start a search for information are often public, non-profit websites.

- Ask your healthcare team for patient or support group referrals.
- If you identify what might help your symptom, ask your doctor for a referral to the appropriate health professional: for example, an occupational therapist, physiotherapist, or psychologist.
- For further information see [Getting Support](#).

Cannabis

There is very little proof that cannabis is successful in managing cancer-related symptoms. The usefulness of cannabis for symptom management depends on a number of things, such as the type of cannabis and your health. In some cases, cannabis may make symptoms worse. Therefore, it is important that you talk to your doctor before experimenting with cannabis for managing your symptoms.

Resources

For more information on cancer-related symptoms, ways to manage them and support organizations, check out the resources below.

[Canadian Cancer Society – Managing symptoms and side effects](#)

Acknowledgement of sources

The content of this document has been adapted from the following sources:

- Coping Together. Recognising and Monitoring Other Symptoms. 2013
- Canadian Cancer Society. Managing symptoms and side effects.
- TEMPO. Getting more information about cancer and treatment.

Healthcare professional endorsement

The content of this document has been reviewed and approved by a team of healthcare professionals and clinical experts.

Disclaimer

Please note that this fact sheet is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare professional. If you have questions about your health, or any medical issue, you should contact a healthcare professional right away. You should not delay seeking medical advice, or disregard professional medical advice, because of information in this fact sheet. Before beginning any health treatment, always consult your doctor. All care has been taken to ensure that the information contained in this document is accurate at the time of publication. e-IMPAQc is not responsible for any injury or damage to persons or property arising out of, or related to, any use of the fact sheet, or because of any errors or omissions.

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