

An Introduction to the Chemotherapy Suite at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre

Consent

It is a legal requirement to have a signed Consent Form from you before the start of your treatment.

If you have already been given one of these forms, please bring the completed form with you when you come for your first appointment.

If you have not been given a form, this will be discussed with you at your first appointment.

Identification

Please note that it is a legal requirement for the staff to check your name and details against your treatment sheet and your hospital name band each time you attend.

You must wear your name band at all times whilst in hospital.

This leaflet has been written in collaboration with oncologists, health professionals, patients and carers at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.

If you have difficulty reading this size of print, a version of this leaflet or any of our leaflets can be produced for you in a larger print.

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Introduction

Welcome to the Chemotherapy Outpatient Suite at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre. This leaflet is written for patients and aims to provide a step by step guide to how the unit works.

The Chemotherapy Suite operates as a day unit. This means that although you will not need to stay in hospital overnight to have your chemotherapy, some patients will need to spend most of the day in the Chemotherapy Suite in order to receive treatment. Other patients will be on a two stop system: they will spend half a day preparing for their chemotherapy treatment and return on another day for their treatment. Whether you are scheduled for a one stop or two stop treatment will depend on many factors, including your type of treatment and whether you live near the hospital. Your nurse will tell you which treatment option can be offered to you.

Please note:

It may not always be possible for you to receive your treatment in the Chemotherapy Suite. On occasions you may be asked to receive your treatment on one of the wards as a day patient.

Pre-Chemo Consultation

Before starting your treatment you will be asked to attend a pre-chemotherapy group session. At your session the chemotherapy nurse will:

- Explain about the drugs you are to be given, and any potential side-effects, together with advice on how these can be kept to a minimum
- Answer any questions you may have relating to your treatment plan.
- Take a sample of blood for analysis.
- Give you a tour of the department and Mount Vernon Cancer Centre, and provide you with any additional information you need.

One stop treatment

When you arrive

When you arrive at the Chemotherapy Suite, you will be greeted by one of our receptionists. You will be sent to the pathology department if you have not already had blood taken.

Your day in the Chemotherapy Suite

On the day you come for your chemotherapy, it is very important that you do not have any other outside appointments or arrangements. We also advise you to arrange for someone else to collect your children from school on the day of your treatment (if necessary). It is preferable if you can arrange childcare, as it is not a suitable environment for young children. However, if this is impossible, please talk to the staff before you bring them into the unit.

After your blood sample has been taken you may see your consultant or one of the doctors on his/her team in the outpatient clinics. They like to see you on a regular basis to monitor your progress and discuss any issues you may have regarding your treatment or condition. If it is not necessary for you to see a doctor, you will be assessed by a specialist nurse.

If your blood count (test result) is not high enough for you to receive your treatment, you will be asked to come back again, probably the following week. This is to give the blood cells time to recover and reach an acceptable level for chemotherapy.

In this case, please make sure you see the receptionist in

the Chemotherapy Suite to book another appointment before you go home.

If your blood count shows that you are able to have your chemotherapy, the doctor will call the pharmacy and ask them to start preparing your drugs. This process can take anything from 1 to 2 hours (as they are made individually for each patient). If you are not required to see a doctor, the nurse will order your drugs.

You will then have to wait for your chemotherapy drugs to be made up. These will be sent to the pharmacy and then delivered to the Chemotherapy Suite.

Whilst waiting

This wait offers you a good opportunity to go and have some refreshments. The Comforts Fund runs a coffee bar in the radiotherapy waiting area which provides hot and cold drinks and snacks (Monday - Friday, 10.00am - 4.00pm). In the Mount Vernon Treatment Centre there is a coffee bar which also sells snacks and other items (Monday - Friday, 8.00am - 5.00pm). The Oak Tree Restaurant has a self-service cafeteria, hot meals and snack service (7.00am - 7.45pm).

You may leave the hospital to have a break if you wish. A number of local pubs serve lunch (remember no alcohol!), while the nearest shops are in Northwood.

If you have a mobile phone, please leave your number with your nurse or the Chemotherapy Suite receptionist. If you live nearby you can go home, but please make sure we have your phone number. We will ring you when your drugs are ready.

You could also use this time to visit the Lynda Jackson

Macmillan Centre (next door to the CHS) and find out about the services they offer.

The question everyone asks

‘Why does it take so long for my chemotherapy drugs to arrive?’

As soon as the doctor asks the pharmacy to prepare your drugs, they in turn contact the pharmaceutical company on site, where all the chemotherapy drugs are prepared in sterile ‘aseptic’ conditions.

They deal with hundreds of prescriptions each day, and the process is time-consuming, as it requires extreme care and the technical skills of highly trained staff.

Now and then there are unexpected and unavoidable delays in the process, and this means that the time you spend waiting can sometimes be longer than either you or we would like.

We hope you will understand that, because safety is absolutely vital, such delays cannot always be avoided.

Your chemotherapy drugs have arrived

Once your chemotherapy drugs have arrived (via the pharmacy where they have been re-checked) a nurse will call you into the treatment room as soon as a chair is available. A cannula (a fine, flexible tube) will be placed in one of the veins in your arm for treatment unless you have a port, picc or Hickman Line.

You will be given some anti-sickness medication, either to take by mouth or as an injection through the cannula.

The length of time it takes to give your treatment can vary

depending on the particular treatment you are having.

Whilst you are receiving your chemotherapy treatment, our pharmacist will give you any additional drugs you need to take home. He or she will explain what they are and when to take them.

When your treatment has finished the cannula will be removed.

Remember to get a form for your next blood slip and make your next appointment with the Chemotherapy Suite receptionists before you leave.

Two stop treatment

You will receive two appointments. The first is to see your doctor in clinic before your treatment and the second to receive your chemotherapy in the Chemotherapy Suite. One to two days before your clinic appointment you will need to have blood taken at one of the centres below:

- Watford General Hospital
- St Albans City Hospital
- Hemel Hempstead Hospital
- Hillingdon Hospital
- Luton and Dunstable Hospital
- Barnet Hospital
- Lister Hospital

First appointment

If you have not had a blood test at your local hospital, go straight to the phlebotomy department (haematology) for a blood test. If the pathology department is very busy, it is ok for you to go to your clinic appointment first and then go back to pathology.

Check in with the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre clinic receptionists. After this, you may see your consultant or one of the doctors on his/her team. They like to see you on a regular basis to monitor your progress and discuss any issues you may have regarding your treatment or condition. If it is not necessary for you to see a doctor, you will be assessed by a specialist nurse.

Remember to make your next appointment with the outpatient clinic receptionists before going home.

Second appointment

This appointment will be for your treatment in the Chemotherapy Suite. When you arrive you will need to check in with the Chemotherapy Suite receptionists.

Your chemotherapy drugs will have been prepared ready for your appointment, so you will normally wait no more than 15 minutes for your treatment. A cannula (a fine, flexible tube) will be placed in one of the veins in your arm for treatment unless you have a port, picc or Hickman Line.

You will be given some anti-sickness medication, either to take by mouth or as an injection through the cannula.

The length of time it takes to give your treatment can vary depending on the particular treatment you are having.

Whilst you are receiving your chemotherapy treatment, our pharmacist will give you any additional drugs you need to take home. He or she will explain what they are and when to take them.

When your chemotherapy treatment is finished

When you have finished your treatment, your nurse will take the cannula out of your arm and you can go home.

Before you leave, **remember to get a form for your next blood test before you leave and make your next appointment with the Chemotherapy Suite receptionist.**

Please remember that this is just an outline of how the unit works; things may vary from day to day.

It is very important to us to provide a high level of care for every patient, and to ensure that waiting times are kept to a minimum.

Although we are busy, while you are with us we will always find time to listen to your concerns and to discuss any problems or queries you may have about your disease and its treatment. Please ask if you wish to speak to someone senior.

The Cancer Centre has a Modern Matron who oversees the wards and out-patient areas. She has an important role in monitoring and improving your experience as a patient.

Staff can contact the Matron if you have any issues or concerns you wish to discuss. If you want to contact the Matron yourself, you can do so by calling the hospital switchboard on 01923 826111 and asking for Bleep 6113.

Mobile Phones

There is restricted use of mobile phones in the Chemotherapy Suite as they can disturb other patients. Please go outside to use them, or send a text message.

Parking

A Pay & Display parking scheme operates 24 hours a day. Patients attending the Cancer Centre can buy tokens at a reduced rate, available from the Car Park office located near the main hospital entrance. Follow the signs from the Oak Tree Restaurant or ask at Patient Affairs.

You will need to show your appointment card/letter. Each token entitles you to park for up to ten hours and can be purchased using pound coins only.

Blue badge holders may park in a designated disabled bay or in any bay in a car park. They do not need to display a ticket but MUST display their badge for free parking.

Getting help with paying for transport

If you are on a low income, you may be eligible for help with paying for the cost of transport to and from the hospital. This includes bus and train fares and car mileage but not taxi costs.

For further information about eligibility, please speak to Patient Affairs (01923 844292) or visit www.direct.gov.uk and search for 'Travel costs'.

Contacts

We hope you have found this leaflet helpful. If, however, you need us in the meantime:

Chemotherapy Suite Reception: 01923 844639
Monday - Friday (8.00am - 5.30pm).

Bleep the Chemotherapy Nurse Specialist
via the hospital switchboard
(Mon - Fri 8.30am - 4pm).....(01923 826111) Bleep 6073

Alternatively call our direct line number:
Chemotherapy Suite: 01923 844527
(8am - 5.30pm Monday - Friday)

Outside these times you can contact:

Ward 10: 01923 844205

or

Ward 11: 01923 844215

Or

Bleep a senior nurse
via the hospital switchboard
.....(01923 826111) Bleep 6113
(This is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.)

Can anyone else help?

Yes. The staff in the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre (LJMC) next door to the Chemotherapy Suite also work as part of the overall team caring for you.

They provide additional help, support and information on issues associated with your illness. Other services include a range of complementary therapies, counselling and benefits advice in a relaxed setting. You are welcome to drop in without an appointment - see back page for opening times and more information.

Talking can often help to deal with the problem, so please feel free to drop in before, during or after your treatment course, to find out more about the services provided. Staff at the LJMC are here to listen and try to help you.

Call the LJMC Helpline on 01923 844014.

This leaflet forms part of a series of publications produced by the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre (LJMC).

If you would like further information about any aspect of cancer and its treatments, please drop in to the centre or call the Helpline.

The LJMC is staffed by healthcare professionals and trained volunteers and is part of the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.

- Drop-in centre for support and information
- Telephone Helpline
- Benefits Advice *
- Pre-treatment visits*
- Complementary therapies *
- Relaxation classes
- Counselling *
- Support groups
- Look Good...Feel Better™ beauty workshops

* These services are available to patients under the care of an NHS oncologist based at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.

If you normally pay for NHS prescriptions

People undergoing treatment for cancer do not have to pay NHS prescription charges if they have a valid medical exemption certificate.

Apply for an exemption certificate by collecting an application form from your GP.

Opening hours: Mon - Fri: 9.30am - 1.00pm & 2.00 - 4.30pm

Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre

situated between the Cancer Centre and Gate 3 (White Hill)

Mount Vernon Hospital, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2RN

Telephone Helpline: **01923 844014**

www.ljmc.org

