

Your introduction to immuno-oncology therapy

Find information about cancer immunotherapy,
your healthcare team, and other resources
that can help you





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Your healthcare team

Your healthcare team will plan and administer your treatment, help you manage side effects, and provide practical and emotional support to you and your family.

It's important to know who is on your healthcare team and what they do. Depending on your situation, your healthcare team may have some or all of these members. You may have other team members that aren't listed here.

Team member	Role in your care	Name and contact information
Family doctor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Plays an important part in your general healthcare before, during and after cancer treatmentsMay follow up with you after your cancer treatment	
Medical oncologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Treats cancer using drugsIs often the main doctor for someone with cancerOften makes a cancer diagnosis based on your test resultsHelps you manage side effects	
Oncology nurse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Specializes in caring for people with cancerCoordinates your care and can help you communicate with members of your healthcare teamHelps explain lab results to youHelps you manage side effects	
Pharmacist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Prepares cancer drugs and other medicines and explains how they workExplains how to take a drug and how often to take itTells you about potential side effects and what to do if you have them	
Surgical oncologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Performs biopsies and surgeries to diagnose and treat cancer	
Radiation oncologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Treats cancer using radiation and develops your radiation therapy treatment plan	
Reimbursement specialist/drug navigator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">May be specifically assigned to your oncology teamHelps with access to resources and financial help	
Other medical specialist (e.g., dermatologist, respirologist, rheumatologist)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Will give advice and care based on their specializations	
Other healthcare specialists (e.g., social worker, counselor, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, dietician, speech pathologist)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Will give advice and care around living with illness and therapy	

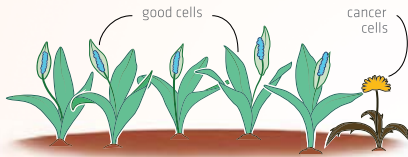
Cancer and the immune system

The immune system is made up of many cells and tissues in your body that work together to keep you healthy. It helps protect the body from invaders, including bacteria, viruses, and cancer.

Many cancers are probably prevented by our immune system, which searches for and destroys abnormal cells. However, cancer cells can sometimes outwit the immune system in different ways.

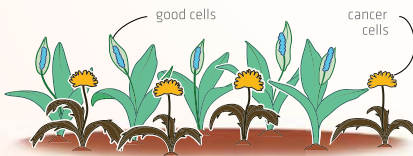
It may help to use a garden analogy. Think of your body as a garden where the soil is your immune system, the good plants are your good cells, and the weeds are the cancer cells.

Healthy body



When you're healthy, the good plants grow and the soil helps keep the weeds away. In other words, a healthy body has a better chance of preventing cancer cells from forming.

Body with cancer

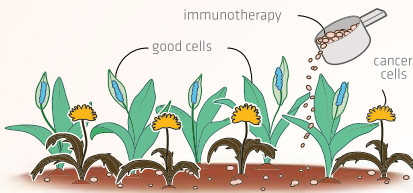


Cancer cells are like weeds in your garden. Sometimes the soil can allow weeds to grow and spread, and soon, the entire garden suffers as plants compete for space and nutrients. This can happen when cancer cells are growing in your body.

How immunotherapy helps the immune system fight cancer

There are many different types of treatment used to treat cancer. You may be familiar with some of the treatments for cancer, such as surgery, radiation therapy, targeted therapy, and chemotherapy. One type of treatment is called immunotherapy.

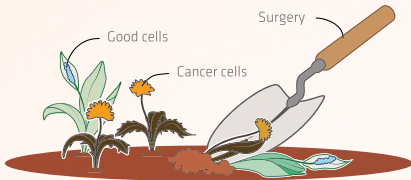
Immunotherapy



Thinking back to the garden analogy, immunotherapy is like adding a fertilizer to the soil. It works by helping your immune system to attack cancer cells. Keep in mind that fertilizer is not guaranteed to work for all kinds of weeds, and too much fertilizer may also harm your garden.

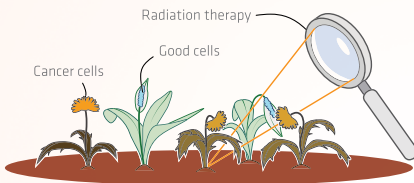
You may have been prescribed immunotherapy as a treatment on its own or in combination with other types of cancer therapy.

Surgery



Surgery directly removes the weeds along with some of the healthy plants and soil around them.

Radiation therapy



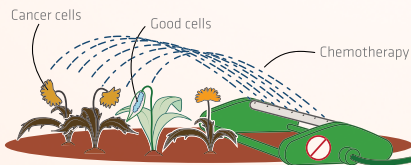
Radiation treatment is like using a magnifying glass to increase the power of the sun and aiming its rays at the weeds to damage or remove them, so they cannot grow or make new plants. Sometimes other healthy plants nearby might get damaged as well.

Targeted therapy



Weeds are directly sprayed with weed killer. Good plants may still be damaged.

Chemotherapy



Chemotherapy is similar to spraying a weed killer on the whole garden. The goal is to kill the weeds, but sometimes some of the healthy plants are also affected.

Side effects of immunotherapy

What symptoms should you look out for?

Immune-related side effects arising from treatment with immunotherapy can affect any organ or tissue, but most commonly affect the skin, colon, lungs, liver and endocrine organs (such as the pituitary gland or thyroid gland).

Side effects can happen at any time during treatment – and sometimes even after treatment has finished. Most immune-related side effects can be managed if detected early and treated, so it's important that you mention any symptoms that are worrying you to your healthcare team right away.

Look out for any of the following symptoms, and notify your healthcare team accordingly.

When do side effects occur?

Immune-related side effects typically occur within weeks to several months after you begin treatment. Side effects may even occur after you have finished treatment. Everyone is different, and some people may experience side effects after a few days of immunotherapy, while others may develop side effects months or years later.

Being familiar with the types of side effects you may experience can help you recognize them. Always talk to your healthcare team if you notice anything different about the way you are feeling.

**Endocrine organs
(e.g., overactive or
underactive thyroid,
inflammation of the
pituitary gland):**

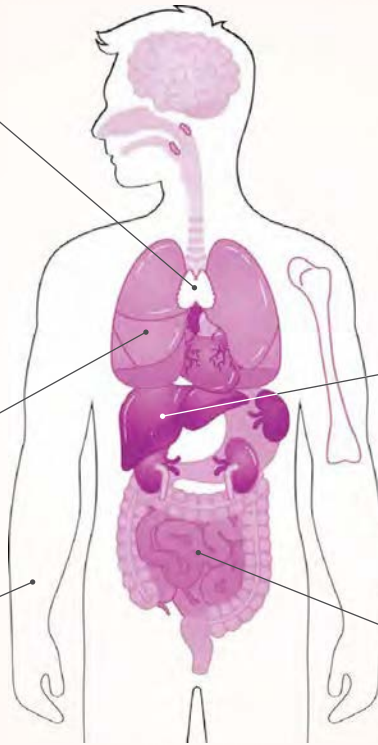
- Fatigue
- Weight change
(gain or loss)
- Nausea/vomiting
- Headache
- Excessive thirst
or appetite
- Excessive and/or
frequent urination

**Lungs (e.g., lung
inflammation):**

- Shortness of breath,
cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain

Skin:

- Extensive rash
or itching
- Blisters or hives
- Loss of pigment



General:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Confusion
- Muscle weakness
or pain
- Numbness
- Painful or swollen
joints
- Fever
- Bruising easily
- Changes in vision/eye
discomfort

**Liver (e.g., liver
inflammation):**

- Hepatitis (may
include yellowing of
the skin and eyes)
- Unusually dark urine
- Tendency to bruise
easily

Gastrointestinal tract:

- Frequent watery
stools
- Diarrhea (especially
containing blood
or mucus)
- Abdominal pain
or tenderness
- Nausea/vomiting

What to do when you have side effects

How should you report your side effects?

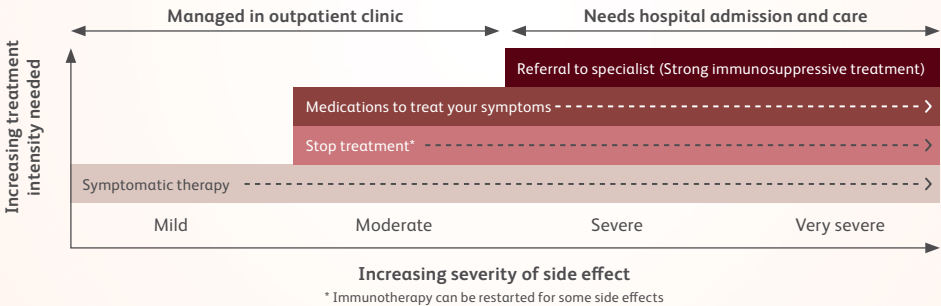
Side effects from immunotherapy are usually mild and reversible if they are reported early. You will often be aware of changes in your own body before your doctors can monitor and detect any symptoms. That is why it is important to report any changes in your health or well-being to your healthcare team as soon as they happen.

It is also important that you explain to your emergency room or family doctor that you are receiving **immunotherapy**. They will contact your medical oncologist, as they have special expertise in managing the side effects related to your treatment.

How will your side effects be managed?

Your side effects can be managed depending on the severity of your symptoms. Your doctor may decide to:

- Treat the symptoms without interrupting or stopping your immunotherapy
- Pause your immunotherapy to treat your symptoms or allow them to subside
- Stop your immunotherapy and refer you to a specialist to treat your symptoms



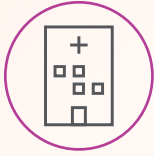
When side effects are identified, they are usually treated symptomatically and sometimes with oral steroids. If symptoms worsen, you may need to be admitted to the hospital for treatment with intravenous steroids or immunosuppressive therapy to control them. It is important to report side effects as soon as they happen so that they can be treated appropriately by your healthcare team.

If your side effects are not treated early, then they may get worse and more difficult to treat. In certain cases, your doctor may decide to stop your immunotherapy temporarily or permanently. However, you may still continue to benefit from immunotherapy as your immune system has already been activated.

What to expect during your immunotherapy appointments

During your treatment, you will have three main types of appointments:

Clinic visits



At the clinic, you will usually meet with your doctor and/or nurse to be assessed. During this appointment, it may be helpful to:

- Tell your doctor or nurse about how you are feeling and whether you have noticed any side effects
- Ask questions you may have about your medication(s)
- Bring this booklet with you to write down notes from your discussion



Blood test visits

At the clinic, you will usually meet with your doctor and/or nurse to have blood tests done

Treatment visits



During this appointment, you will sit in a recliner chair or bed while your nurse gives you any pre-medications and starts your infusion. You may receive lots of information about your treatment, especially during your first visit. Most patients do not feel pain or anything unusual during treatment, but it is important to let your nurse know if you do.

Treatments can take several hours, depending on the drugs you are taking. It can help to take along:

- Items to help pass the time such as books, a tablet or laptop, or music and earphones
- Snacks or food
- A blanket to keep you comfortable

Getting the most out of your appointments

When working with your healthcare team, communication is key. It may take more than one visit to talk to your healthcare provider about your questions and concerns. Preparing for your appointments ahead of time by thinking about what you want to discuss helps you make the most out of the time you have with your doctor.

In the table below, you'll find a list of questions about immunotherapy to help you start conversations with your healthcare provider about topics that are important to you. Use the spaces beside each question to write notes during your discussions.

Question:	Notes:
Why was I prescribed immunotherapy?	<hr/> <hr/>
What are the risks of immunotherapy?	<hr/> <hr/>
When will I receive immunotherapy? How long will I wait until I receive my next dose?	<hr/> <hr/>
What are the brand and generic names of the drugs I have been prescribed, and what is the correct spelling?	<hr/> <hr/>
What are the possible side effects of my immunotherapy, and when would they appear?	<hr/> <hr/>
How can I best prepare for my treatment appointments?	<hr/> <hr/>
What kinds of tests are done during immunotherapy?	<hr/> <hr/>
Will I receive any other treatments at the same time as my immunotherapy?	<hr/> <hr/>

Getting the most out of your appointments

When working with your healthcare team, communication is key. It may take more than one visit to talk to your healthcare provider about your questions and concerns. Preparing for your appointments ahead of time by thinking about what you want to discuss helps you make the most out of the time you have with your doctor.

In the table below, you'll find a list of questions about immunotherapy to help you start conversations with your healthcare provider about topics that are important to you. Use the spaces beside each question to write notes during your discussions.

Question:	Notes:
Will my immunotherapy treatment interact with any other medicines I am currently taking?	<hr/> <hr/>
Who do I call to report my side effects?	<hr/> <hr/>
What side effects should I call my doctor to report?	<hr/> <hr/>
Is there anything I should or should not do before or after immunotherapy?	<hr/> <hr/>
Can I bring a friend or family member when I receive my treatments?	<hr/> <hr/>
	<hr/> <hr/>
	<hr/> <hr/>
	<hr/> <hr/>





Your treatment planner

This 6-month calendar can be used to help you keep track of your clinic and treatment appointments, blood tests, and any other events related to your immunotherapy. You can also use it to note how you are feeling between your appointments, and if you experience any side effects, so that you can relay this information to your healthcare team.

Endocrine organs (e.g., overactive or underactive thyroid, inflammation of the pituitary gland):

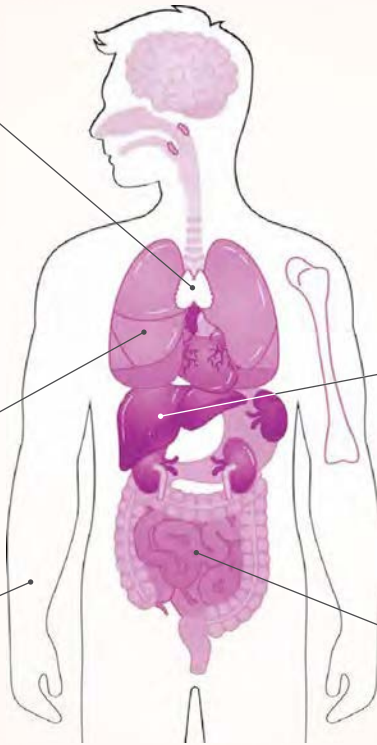
- Fatigue
- Weight change (gain or loss)
- Nausea/vomiting
- Headache
- Excessive thirst or appetite
- Excessive and/or frequent urination

Lungs (e.g., lung inflammation):

- Shortness of breath, cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain

Skin:

- Extensive rash or itching
- Blisters or hives
- Loss of pigment



General:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Confusion
- Muscle weakness or pain
- Numbness
- Painful or swollen joints
- Fever
- Bruising easily
- Changes in vision/eye discomfort

Liver (e.g., liver inflammation):

- Hepatitis (may include yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Unusually dark urine
- Tendency to bruise easily

Gastrointestinal tract:

- Frequent watery stools
- Diarrhea (especially containing blood or mucus)
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Nausea/vomiting

Please note that this is not a complete list of side effects. Remember, it is important to report any changes in your health or well-being to your healthcare team as soon as they happen. For more information on side effects, please see pages 6 to 8 of this booklet.

Month 1

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Use this section to keep track of your treatments, appointments, how you are feeling between your appointments, and if you experience any side effects.

Endocrine organs (e.g., overactive or underactive thyroid, inflammation of the pituitary gland):

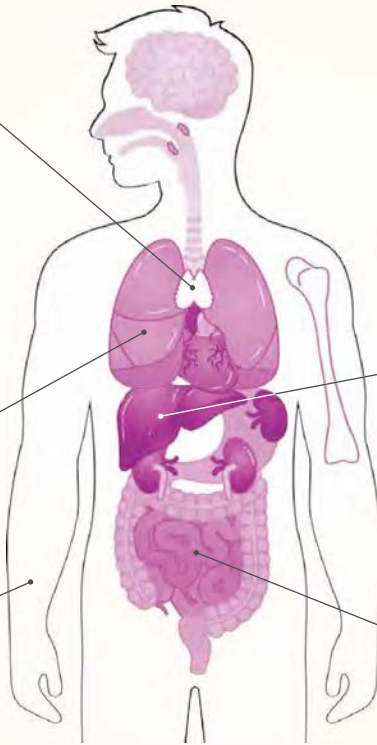
- Fatigue
- Weight change (gain or loss)
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- Headache
- Excessive thirst or appetite
- Excessive and/or frequent urination

Lungs (e.g., lung inflammation):

- Shortness of breath, cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain

Skin:

- Extensive rash or itching
- Blisters or hives
- Loss of pigment



General:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Confusion
- Muscle weakness or pain
- Numbness
- Painful or swollen joints
- Fever
- Bruising easily
- Changes in vision/eye discomfort

Liver (e.g., liver inflammation):

- Hepatitis (may include yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Unusually dark urine
- Tendency to bruise easily

Gastrointestinal tract:

- Frequent watery stools
- Diarrhea (especially containing blood or mucus)
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Nausea/vomiting

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Month 2

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Use this section to keep track of your treatments, appointments, how you are feeling between your appointments, and if you experience any side effects.

Endocrine organs (e.g., overactive or underactive thyroid, inflammation of the pituitary gland):

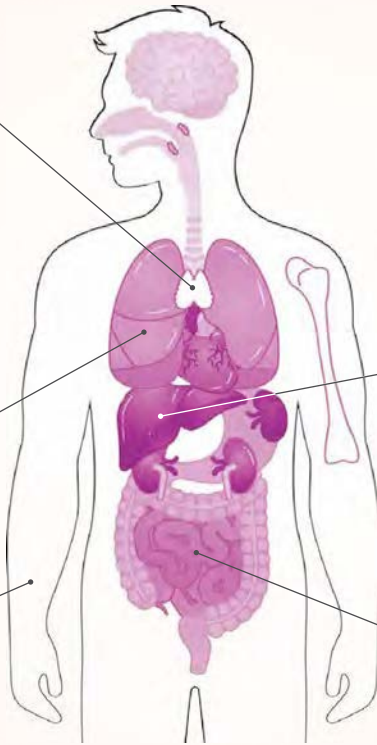
- Fatigue
- Weight change (gain or loss)
- Nausea/vomiting
- Headache
- Excessive thirst or appetite
- Excessive and/or frequent urination

Lungs (e.g., lung inflammation):

- Shortness of breath, cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain

Skin:

- Extensive rash or itching
- Blisters or hives
- Loss of pigment



General:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Confusion
- Muscle weakness or pain
- Numbness
- Painful or swollen joints
- Fever
- Bruising easily
- Changes in vision/eye discomfort

Liver (e.g., liver inflammation):

- Hepatitis (may include yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Unusually dark urine
- Tendency to bruise easily

Gastrointestinal tract:

- Frequent watery stools
- Diarrhea (especially containing blood or mucus)
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Nausea/vomiting

Please note that this is not a complete list of side effects. Remember, it is important to report any changes in your health or well-being to your healthcare team as soon as they happen. For more information on side effects, please see pages 6 to 8 of this booklet.

Month 3

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Use this section to keep track of your treatments, appointments, how you are feeling between your appointments, and if you experience any side effects.

Endocrine organs (e.g., overactive or underactive thyroid, inflammation of the pituitary gland):

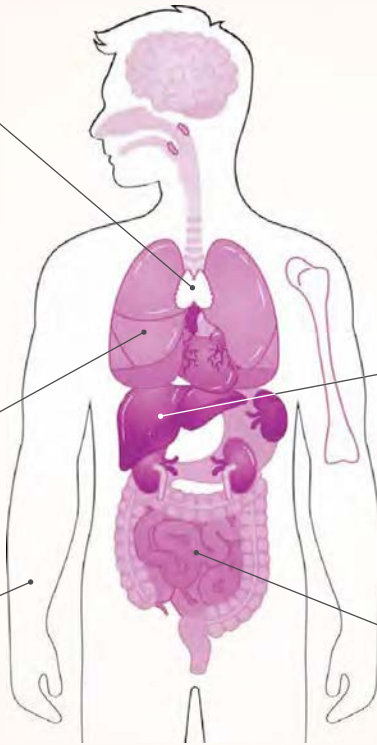
- Fatigue
- Weight change (gain or loss)
- Nausea/vomiting
- Headache
- Excessive thirst or appetite
- Excessive and/or frequent urination

Lungs (e.g., lung inflammation):

- Shortness of breath, cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain

Skin:

- Extensive rash or itching
- Blisters or hives
- Loss of pigment



General:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Confusion
- Muscle weakness or pain
- Numbness
- Painful or swollen joints
- Fever
- Bruising easily
- Changes in vision/eye discomfort

Liver (e.g., liver inflammation):

- Hepatitis (may include yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Unusually dark urine
- Tendency to bruise easily

Gastrointestinal tract:

- Frequent watery stools
- Diarrhea (especially containing blood or mucus)
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Nausea/vomiting

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Month 4

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Use this section to keep track of your treatments, appointments, how you are feeling between your appointments, and if you experience any side effects.

Endocrine organs (e.g., overactive or underactive thyroid, inflammation of the pituitary gland):

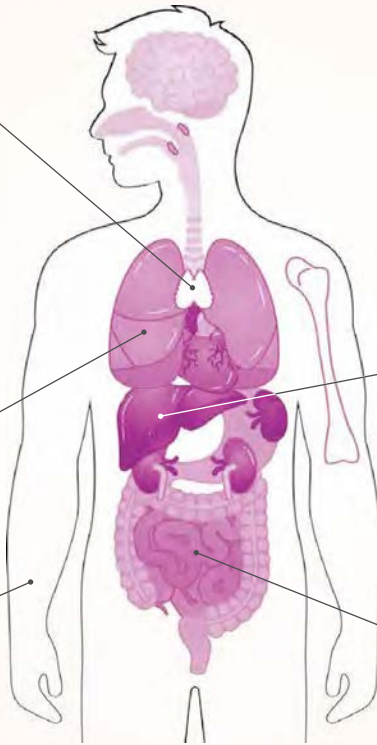
- Fatigue
- Weight change (gain or loss)
- Nausea/vomiting
- Headache
- Excessive thirst or appetite
- Excessive and/or frequent urination

Lungs (e.g., lung inflammation):

- Shortness of breath, cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain

Skin:

- Extensive rash or itching
- Blisters or hives
- Loss of pigment



General:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Confusion
- Muscle weakness or pain
- Numbness
- Painful or swollen joints
- Fever
- Bruising easily
- Changes in vision/eye discomfort

Liver (e.g., liver inflammation):

- Hepatitis (may include yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Unusually dark urine
- Tendency to bruise easily

Gastrointestinal tract:

- Frequent watery stools
- Diarrhea (especially containing blood or mucus)
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Nausea/vomiting

Please note that this is not a complete list of side effects. Remember, it is important to report any changes in your health or well-being to your healthcare team as soon as they happen. For more information on side effects, please see pages 6 to 8 of this booklet.

Month 5

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Use this section to keep track of your treatments, appointments, how you are feeling between your appointments, and if you experience any side effects.

Endocrine organs (e.g., overactive or underactive thyroid, inflammation of the pituitary gland):

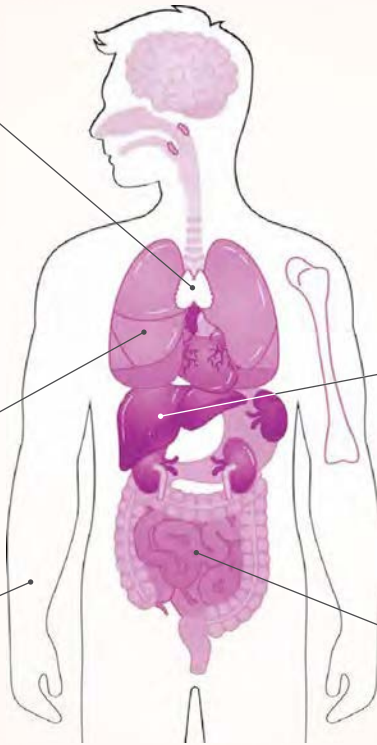
- Fatigue
- Weight change (gain or loss)
- Nausea/vomiting
- Headache
- Excessive thirst or appetite
- Excessive and/or frequent urination

Lungs (e.g., lung inflammation):

- Shortness of breath, cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain

Skin:

- Extensive rash or itching
- Blisters or hives
- Loss of pigment



General:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Confusion
- Muscle weakness or pain
- Numbness
- Painful or swollen joints
- Fever
- Bruising easily
- Changes in vision/eye discomfort

Liver (e.g., liver inflammation):

- Hepatitis (may include yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Unusually dark urine
- Tendency to bruise easily

Gastrointestinal tract:

- Frequent watery stools
- Diarrhea (especially containing blood or mucus)
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Nausea/vomiting

Please note that this is not a complete list of side effects. Remember, it is important to report any changes in your health or well-being to your healthcare team as soon as they happen. For more information on side effects, please see pages 6 to 8 of this booklet.

Month 6

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Use this section to keep track of your treatments, appointments, how you are feeling between your appointments, and if you experience any side effects.

Additional resources that can help you

For more information and support around your condition, consider contacting a Patient Advocacy Group (PAG). PAGs are organizations that provide education, support services and advocacy (speaking on your behalf if you wish) for patients with specific conditions.

When you're first diagnosed – or even later in the course of your condition – you may have a lot of questions or feel a bit lost. PAGs can help by providing you with information, practical advice and tips, support groups and people to answer your questions. Your local or provincial cancer centre will also have many resources available to you.

Consider contacting the following Patient Advocacy Groups, depending on your condition:

Canadian Cancer Survivor Network



survivornet.ca
1-613-898-1871

Canadian Liver Foundation



liver.ca
1-800-563-5483

Kidney Cancer Canada



kidneycancer.ca
1-866-598-7166

Lung Cancer Canada



lungcancer.ca
1-888-445-4403

Lymphoma Canada



lymphoma.ca
1-866-659-5556

For more information
and support around lymphoma:



llscanada.org
1-877-668-8326

Melanoma Network of Canada

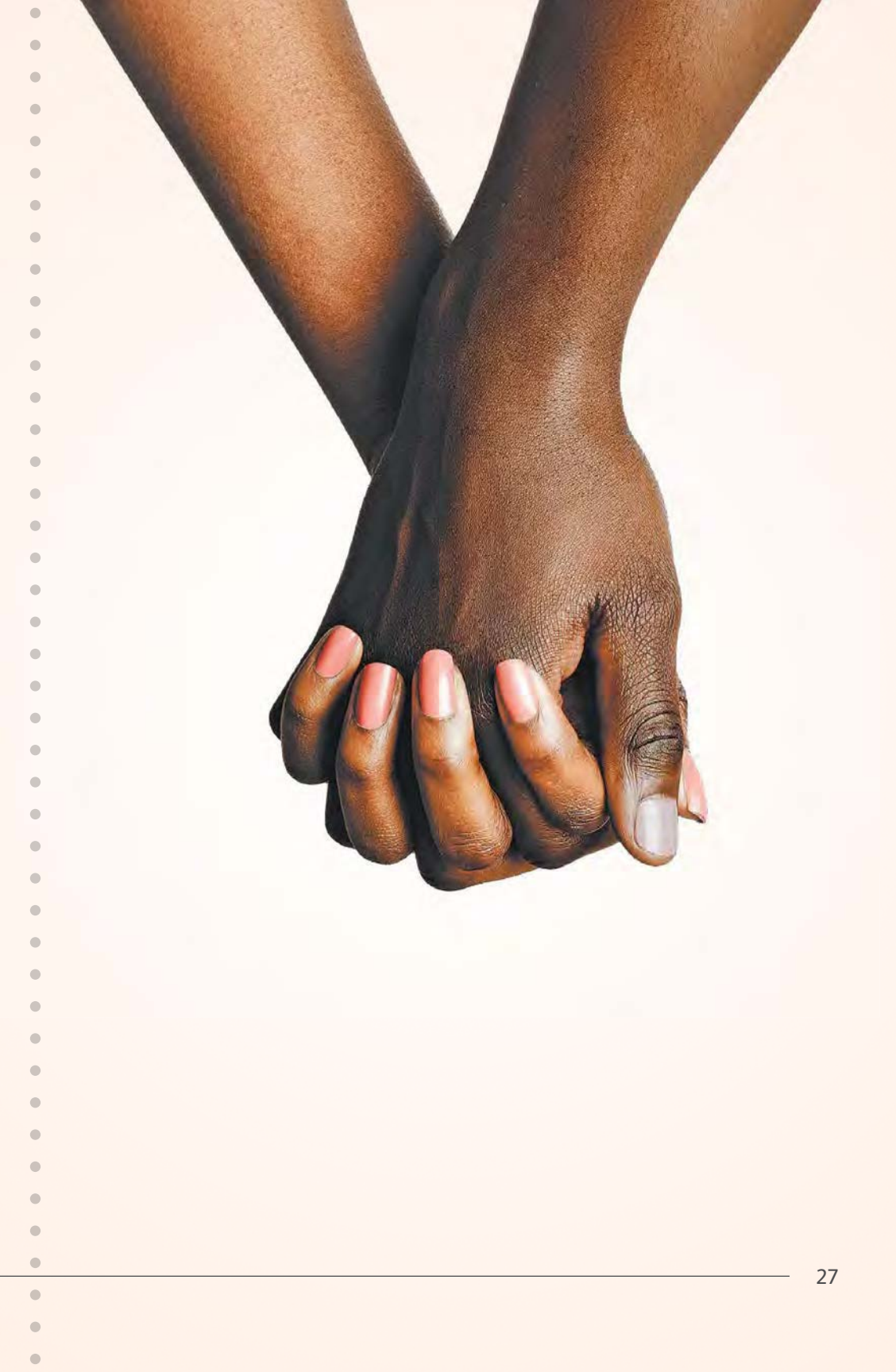


melanomane.ca
1-877-560-8035

Save Your Skin Foundation



saveyourskin.ca
1-800-460-5832



A series of 18 horizontal lines for writing, positioned to the right of a vertical dotted line.

You are encouraged to pay close attention to how you are feeling every day. If you notice a change in how you are feeling – even a small change – contact your oncologist or another member of your healthcare team immediately.

Frequent communication with your healthcare team may help notify them of any side effects of your treatment sooner rather than later. Side effects can be more difficult to treat as they become more severe, so it is important to talk to your healthcare team as soon as you notice anything different.
