



Side Effects Survival Guide

Practical strategies for managing treatment side effects

Fatigue

The most common side effect. Different from normal tiredness.

- Rest when you need to, but try to stay gently active
- Take short walks if you can manage them
- Accept help with household tasks
- Prioritise what matters most each day
- Eat small, frequent meals to maintain energy
- Stay hydrated throughout the day

Nausea and Vomiting

Often preventable with medication. Tell your team if anti-nausea medication isn't working.

- Take anti-nausea medication as prescribed, even if you feel fine
- Eat small amounts often rather than large meals
- Try bland foods: crackers, toast, rice, bananas
- Avoid strong smells and greasy or spicy foods
- Sip ginger tea or eat ginger biscuits
- Get fresh air when possible

Appetite Changes and Taste Changes

Food may taste different during treatment. This usually improves afterwards.

- Eat what appeals to you, when it appeals to you
- Try cold foods if hot food smells are off-putting
- Use plastic utensils if food tastes metallic
- Add lemon or herbs to improve bland tastes
- Milkshakes and smoothies can be easier to manage
- Don't force yourself to eat when you feel too unwell



Mouth Sores and Dry Mouth

- Rinse mouth regularly with salt water or baking soda solution
- Use a soft toothbrush and gentle toothpaste
- Avoid alcohol-based mouthwashes
- Suck on ice chips to soothe mouth sores
- Avoid acidic, spicy, or rough foods
- Keep lips moisturised with a gentle lip balm

Skin Changes (Especially During Radiation)

- Wash the treated area gently with lukewarm water
- Pat dry, don't rub
- Use only products approved by your radiation team
- Wear loose, soft clothing over treated areas
- Protect skin from sun exposure
- Don't apply anything to the skin before radiation treatment

Hair Loss

Not all treatments cause hair loss. If yours does, it usually starts 2-3 weeks after treatment begins.

- Consider cutting hair short before it falls out
- Use a gentle shampoo and soft brush
- Protect your scalp from sun and cold
- Explore head coverings: scarves, hats, wigs
- Your hair will usually grow back after treatment ends



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When to Call Us Immediately

Call the ward or go to emergency if you experience:

- Fever above 38°C or chills
- Severe vomiting or diarrhoea that won't stop
- Bleeding that doesn't stop
- Difficulty breathing or chest pain
- Severe pain not relieved by prescribed medication
- Confusion or changes in consciousness
- Signs of infection: redness, swelling, pus at any wound

Ward (after hours): +264 83 330 5031 | Reception: +264 83 330 5015



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You Are Not Alone

Our team is here to help you through every challenge.
Never hesitate to call with questions or concerns.

*Side effects vary from person to person. Many are manageable with the right strategies.
Always tell your care team about any symptoms that concern you.*