

## Oncology Department

# Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression

## Information for patients and relatives

### What is Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC)?

When people have cancer it can spread to other parts of their body including the spine; this is known as 'spinal metastases'. Spinal metastases can be painful and if not treated can lead to Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression or MSCC. MSCC is rare, but it can cause damage to the spinal cord and may lead to permanent paralysis.

If you have been told that you are at risk of MSCC it is important that you know what symptoms to look out for and who to contact. The earlier that MSCC is identified and treated, the better the result usually is.

### Symptoms to watch out for:

- Back pain in one area of your spine that is severe, distressing or different from your usual pain (especially if it affects the upper spine or neck);
- Severe increasing pain in the spine that changes with lying down or standing up, when lifting, straining, coughing, wakes you at night or prevents sleep;
- Pain which starts in the spine and goes down the chest or abdomen (tummy);
- Pain down the leg or arm;
- A new feeling of clumsiness or weakness of the arms or legs or difficulty walking;
- Numbness in the arms or legs;
- Difficulty in controlling your bladder or bowels.



## Patient Information

### **Exercise and Activity**

- It is important to stay as active as possible, as this can help with fatigue, pain levels, mood and your ability to stay independent. You may benefit from seeking advice from a qualified, experienced physiotherapist as to what activities you can do and that would be helpful
- Neck and back specific exercises should be avoided when you have spinal metastases
- Avoid exercises lying on your front
- If you have metastases in your neck or upper back take care with shoulder movements above your head and with resisted arm exercises. If any increase in pain or altered neurological symptoms occur, the activity should be stopped
- If you have metastases in your mid to lower back take care with hip / pelvic movements and lifting your legs straight in the air. If any increase in pain or altered neurological symptoms occur, the activity should be stopped
- You should avoid heavy lifting and excessive twisting of your back
- Any exercises or activities should be within pain limits. It is important to monitor your pain and sensation. Stop any activity if it worsens your pain

### **If you have any of these symptoms:**

- Speak with a doctor, nurse or paramedic as soon as possible (certainly within 24 hours);
- Tell them that you have cancer, are worried about your spine and would like to see a doctor;
- Show the doctor, nurse or paramedic this leaflet;
- Try to bend your back as little as possible.

## Information for doctors or healthcare professionals

### For the doctor or healthcare professional

- This patient has cancer and is therefore at risk of metastatic spinal cord compression (MSCC).
- If they have any of the symptoms listed then please consider MSCC as a possible diagnosis and discuss further management with the on-call Consultant Oncologist on 024 7696 4000.

### Useful Telephone numbers

#### Consultant Oncologist or Haematologist

Name: .....

Telephone number: .....

#### General Practitioner

Name: .....

Telephone number: .....

#### Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), Palliative care Nurse or Key Worker

Name: .....

Telephone number: .....

### For the doctor or healthcare professional

**Out of hours** please contact:

ACUTE ONCOLOGY SERVICE 02476 964000

Then ask for BLEEP 1641

For further information speak to a member of the Cancer Team looking after you.

## Patient Information

For cancer information and support contact the Macmillan Cancer Support and Information Centre at University Hospital Coventry. It is located in the hospital's main entrance. Telephone: 024 7696 6052.

Open: Monday to Friday 9.00am – 4.00pm (not bank holidays)

### **Macmillan Cancer Support on 0808 808 00 00**

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

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