

Oncology

Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC)

When cancer spreads to other parts of the body, including the spine, it is known as “spinal metastases.” Spinal metastases can be painful and if not treated, they can lead to a condition called Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC). While MSCC is rare, it can cause damage to the spinal cord and may result in permanent paralysis.

If you have been informed that you are at risk of MSCC, it is important to know the symptoms to look out for and whom to contact. The earlier 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).
- Increasing spine pain that goes worse with lying down, standing up, lifting, straining or coughing.
- Pain that wakes you up at night or stops you from sleeping.
- Pain that starts in the spine and goes down to the chest or tummy (abdomen).
- Pain down the leg or arm.
- New feelings of clumsiness or weakness in the arms or legs or difficulty walking.
- Numbness in the arms or legs.
- Difficulty controlling your bladder or bowels.



Exercise and activity

- It is important to stay as active as possible, as this can help with managing tiredness, pain, 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 that require 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. Stop the activity if you experience increased pain or changes in neurological symptoms.
- For metastases in your mid to lower back, take care with hip or pelvic movements and lifting your legs straight in the air. Stop the activity if you notice increased pain or changes in neurological symptoms.
- You should avoid heavy lifting and excessive twisting of your back.
- All exercises or activities stay within your 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:

- Contact a doctor, nurse or paramedic as soon as possible (ideally 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 avoid bending your back as little as possible.

Information for doctors or healthcare professionals:

- This patient has cancer and is at risk of Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC).
- If they have any of the symptoms listed, please consider MSCC as a possible diagnosis and discuss further management with the on-call Consultant Oncologist on 024 7696 4000.

Patient Information

Useful Telephone numbers

Acute Oncology Service (available 24/7)

024 7696 4000, then ask for bleep 1641 or

Direct number 24 hours – 024 7696 4105

Consultant Oncologist or Haematologist

Name:

Telephone number:

General Practitioner (GP)

Name:

Telephone number:

Cancer Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS), Palliative care nurse or key worker

Name:

Telephone number:

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

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.

Patient Information

Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

Have your say. Scan the QR code or visit:

www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback



Document History

Department:	Oncology
Contact:	26052
Updated:	September 2024
Review:	September 2026
Version:	9
Reference:	HIC/LFT/1207/11