

PRIMARY CARE 10 TOP TIPS

Late effects: what to consider after cancer treatment ends

This edition:
Next planned review:

We make every effort to ensure the information in these pages is accurate and correct at the date of publication, but it is of necessity of a brief and general nature, and this should not replace your own good clinical judgement, or be regarded as a substitute for taking professional advice in appropriate circumstances. In particular check any drug doses, side-effects and interactions. Save insofar as any such liability cannot be excluded at law, we do not accept any liability in relation to the use of or reliance on any information contained in these pages, or third-party information or websites referred to in them.

Macmillan Cancer Support, registered charity in England and Wales (261017), Scotland (SC039907) and the Isle of Man (604). Also operating in Northern Ireland. MAC14531_Late effects

Some people with cancer will experience a wide range of physical and psychosocial consequences of treatment. Problems can persist, or appear as new problems, years or many decades after treatment.

Cancer survival is improving but the incidence of severe consequences is unchanged. Identify those who have had cancer treatment – but not all those at risk will be affected. The Treatment Summary from the cancer care team will help the recording of cancer treatment and future risk of consequences. Cancer patients are more at risk of chronic illness and of earlier onset, and are more receptive to intervention. Cancer patients also have an increased risk of second primary tumours – especially for people treated as a child or young person. Primary care is good at managing these chronic and long term conditions.

The following are some considerations to be aware of around late effects:

- 1** Adverse consequences of treatment occur – healthy tissues will be damaged during treatment, but most people will recover from acute side effects.
- 2** Once late effects are identified, much can be done to mitigate these. Information and support can help patients to self-manage.
- 3** Pelvic radiation has a high risk of causing chronic bowel, urinary and sexual dysfunction.
- 4** Hypothyroidism is increased in young cancer patients and after head and neck radiotherapy.
- 5** Systemic treatments for prostate and breast cancer can increase risk of cardiovascular problems and osteoporosis.
- 6** Radiotherapy to the lung or chest increases lung cancer risk.
- 7** Chemotherapy increases leukaemia risk and radiotherapy tumour risk.
- 8** Social implications of cancer can include break down of relationships, social isolation, and financial worries caused by disruption to work.
- 9** Fear of recurrence is common, and psychosocial consequences of cancer can result in persistent mental health difficulties including moderate to severe anxiety or depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- 10** Physical activity after treatment for cancer can reduce some side effects including lymphoedema, fatigue, impaired mobility and weight changes.

**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**
RIGHT THERE WITH YOU