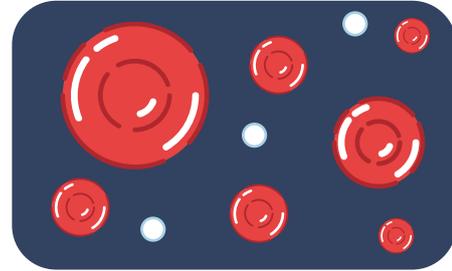


Patients presenting with signs of infection and/or fevers and chills consider

# NEUTROPENIC SEPSIS



Neutropenic sepsis is a serious life-threatening infection which cancer patients are at high risk of developing due to reduced immune system function from cancer treatment. This can occur at any time during or within 8 weeks of receiving chemotherapy.



## Over-the-counter conversations:

When responding to symptoms in the pharmacy, it is important to establish which medications a patient is taking. This is because:

- It could be a side effect to a medicine
- It could be a reason to stop a medicine
- It can influence the over-the-counter advice/treatments you can recommend

You may want to incorporate the following questions into your conversations:

- Do you take any medicines prescribed by your GP?
- Are you on any treatment in/from the hospital?
- What condition do you have hospital treatment for?

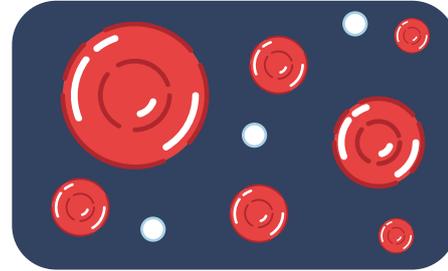
**IF A PATIENT IS ON CANCER TREATMENT OR TREATMENT FROM THE HOSPITAL, ALWAYS REFER TO YOUR PHARMACIST FOR FURTHER ASSESSMENT AND ADVICE.**

The full Let's Communicate Cancer course is available by clicking [here](#)

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# NEUTROPENIC SEPSIS



## Pharmacist Intervention:

### Assess the symptom

When assessing the patient's symptoms, it is important to try and address the following:

1. What type of cancer treatment they are receiving
  - Chemotherapy/Radiotherapy/Immunotherapy/Surgery.
  - Route of administration - Oral/Injection/Infusion.
2. Whether the symptom they are experiencing is a side effect that the hospital has made them aware of
  - Patients receiving chemotherapy rather than immunotherapy or radiotherapy are at higher risk of developing neutropenic sepsis.
3. Has the hospital provided any advice or medicines on how to manage this side effect
  - Patients are usually advised about taking their temperature when they feel unwell and when to contact their cancer teams or 24hr cancer treatment "hotline" based on the temperature readings.
  - Paracetamol is usually not advised if patient is receiving chemotherapy as it can mask a temperature. This can impair assessment of the severity of the patients' condition.
4. The outcome of following this advice
  - Ask patient about what other symptoms they may have in addition to the fever/ chills. Have they taken their temperature; if so what was the reading?

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# NEUTROPENIC SEPSIS

Assess the severity (grade) using the table below:

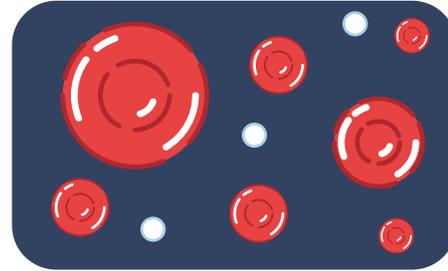
Grade	0	1	2
Signs of infection and temperature readings?	No signs of infection and temperature is 36-37.5°C	Localised signs of infection, but otherwise generally well with a normal temperature 36-37.5°C  If patients have received cancer treatment within the past 8 weeks, or are <17 years old, and display ANY of the following symptoms then refer to their cancer team. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Behavioural changes/reduced activity levels</li> <li>● Breathing harder than normal</li> <li>● Reduced urine output over past 48 hours</li> <li>● Not passed urine within past 12-18 hours</li> <li>● Signs of localised infection</li> </ul>	Signs of systemic infection, generally feeling unwell and/or temperature <36°C or >37.5°C  Patients with systemic infection may present with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Altered mental state</li> <li>● Difficulty standing</li> <li>● Unable to catch their breath</li> <li>● Skin that is pale, mottled or ashen</li> <li>● A rash that does not fade when pressed</li> <li>● Not urine passed within the past 12-18 hours</li> </ul>
Action	OTC advice / treatment	OTC advice/treatment. Refer to their cancer team for further investigation	Immediate referral to cancer team

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# NEUTROPENIC SEPSIS



Advice and over the counter treatments which can be provided in the pharmacy **GRADE 0/GRADE 1**

- Encourage patient to drink plenty of fluids and get plenty of rest
- Advise patient to continue to monitor temperature regularly whilst symptomatic of infection and/or if feeling unwell

When to refer cross sector primary/secondary care **Grade 1/Grade 2**

Advise patient to contact their hospital,

- If they have a temperature of  $<36^{\circ}\text{C}$  or  $>37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$
- If they are feeling generally unwell
- If their symptoms have worsened

How to refer cross sector primary/secondary care

- Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) in hospital cancer care team
- 24-hour hospital cancer treatment "hotline"

**Additional Support**

Comprehensive information regarding individual cancers, or cancer treatments, is available from the **Macmillan website**

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