Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC)

Information for patients

This leaflet can be made available in other formats including large print, CD and Braille and in languages other than English, upon request.

This leaflet tells you about Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC) and who to contact if you have any worries or concerns.

What is MSCC?

MSCC is when the spinal nerves are squeezed, which can cause damage to the spinal cord to the point of complete paralysis (loss of movement) from the neck, chest or waist downwards.

![Diagram of the spinal cord](Diagram of the spinal cord

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What are the symptoms of MSCC?

Symptoms can include:

- back pain in areas of your spine which is severe, distressing or different from your usual pain (especially if it affects the upper spine or neck)
Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression (MSCC)

- severe increasing pain in the spine that changes when:
  - lying down or standing up
  - lifting or straining
  - it wakes you at night or prevents sleep
- pain which starts in your spine and goes around 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 and hands or legs and feet
- difficulty with urinating (not being able to pass urine or being aware that you have passed urine) or problems with controlling bowel function

What should I do if I have any of these symptoms?

If you have any of these symptoms:

You must:

- speak with a doctor or healthcare professional as soon as possible, within 24 hours. Tell them you have cancer and are worried about your spine and would like to see a doctor.
- show the doctor or healthcare professional this leaflet
- try to bend your back as little as possible

The earlier MSCC is diagnosed, the better the chances of the treatment being effective (working).

What will happen next?

If your doctor or healthcare professional is concerned that your spinal nerves are being squeezed (spinal cord compression) he or she will usually send you straight to hospital, so you can have an urgent scan and start the right treatment.
Contact numbers

If you need further advice or have any problems please contact the appropriate number below:

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust

Acute Oncology Nurse Practitioners
telephone the hospital switchboard on 01642 617617
ask them to bleep the Acute Oncology Nurse Practitioners on 6661 or 6662.

If you have any of the symptoms listed please contact your Clinical Nurse Specialist or GP.

If you are a Health Professional and suspect MSCC, please contact the MSCC Co-ordinator at your District General Hospital during working hours to arrange an urgent MRI for your patient.

For urgent advice out of hours please contact the oncologist on-call at the cancer centre.

Further information is available from:

NHS Choices
telephone:111 (when it is less urgent than 999)
Calls to this number are free from landlines and mobile phones
or via the website at www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

North of England Cancer Network
c/o South Tyneside PCT
Waterfront 4
Goldcrest Way
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE15 8NY
telephone: 01912754748
Or via the website at www.necn.nhs.uk
This leaflet has been produced in partnership with patients and carers. All patient leaflets are regularly reviewed, and any suggestions you have as to how it may be improved are extremely valuable. Please write to the Quality Assurance Team, University Hospital of North Tees or email: patientinformation@nth.nhs.uk

**Comments, Concerns, Compliments or Complaints**

We are continually trying to improve the services we provide.

We want to know what we’re doing well or if there’s anything which we can improve, that’s why the Patient Experience Team is here to help.

Our Patient Experience Team is here to try to resolve your concerns as quickly as possible. If you would like to contact or request a copy of our PET leaflet, please contact:

- telephone: 01642 624719  
  Monday – Friday, 9.00 am – 4.00 pm  
  Messages can be left on the answering machine and will be picked up throughout the day.

- freephone: 0800 092 0084  
  Mobile: (can use text): 0779 506 1883  
  Email: patientexperience@nth.nhs.uk

Out of hours if you wish to speak to a senior member of Trust staff, please contact the hospital switchboard who will bleep the appropriate person.

- telephone: 01642 617617  
  24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The Patient Experience Team is available to discuss your concerns in person Monday – Friday, 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm. The office is based on the ground floor at the University Hospital of North Tees.

**Data Protection and use of patient information**

The Trust has developed a Data Protection Policy in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All of our staff respect this policy and confidentiality is adhered to at all times. If you require further information please contact the Information Governance Team.

- telephone: 01642 833551 or email: information.governance@nth.nhs.uk

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University Hospital of Hartlepool, Holdforth Road, Hartlepool. TS24 9AH

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Fax: 01642 624089