

# Cancer Healing Messages

for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people  
visiting medical services in South Australia





# A Cancer Journey

Information about cancer diagnosis, treatment and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by cancer.

## **About this chart**

Cancer Council SA has developed this flip chart to assist Aboriginal Health Workers and Aboriginal Health Services support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families affected by cancer.

The flip chart can be used to guide discussions with clients and their family members.

One side of the flip chart is for the health workers to read to their client and the other side of the chart is for the client to see.

## **Acknowledgements**

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This resource has been adapted from the Journey of Healing flip chart that was developed in Queensland by the Townsville Cancer Centre, with support from Queensland Health.

Editing, illustrations and design were completed by Dreamtime Public Relations.

**For more information see [www.cancersa.org.au](http://www.cancersa.org.au)**



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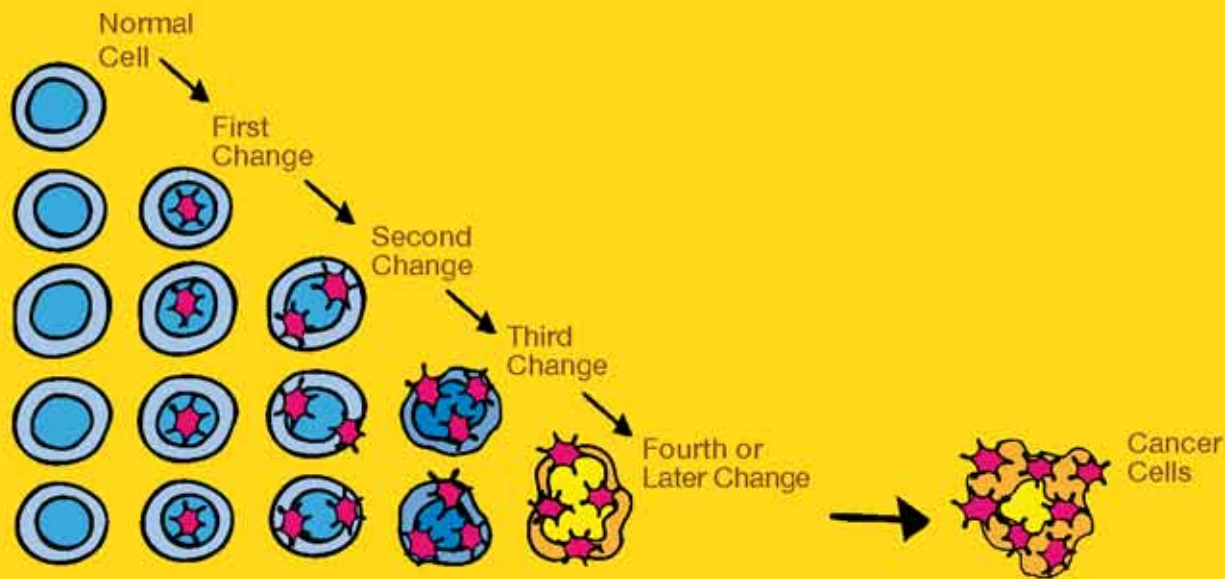


# What is cancer

- the body is made up of many tiny cells
- when cells get old or worn out, they die and are replaced by new cells, which is normal and keeps us healthy
- cancer is the general term used to describe cells that grow and spread around the body in an uncontrolled way
- there are many different types of cancer
- the good news is that many cancers can be treated if found early.

# What is cancer

- your body is made up of many tiny cells
- when cells get old or worn out, they are replaced by new cells which is normal
- cancer is when the cells grow and spread around the body in an uncontrolled way
- cancer cells are different to normal cells and can make you sick
- there are many different types of cancer
- many cancers can be treated if found early.





## What might happen if you are diagnosed with cancer

- depending on where you live you may need to travel for treatment
- if you live in a rural or remote area you may need to go to a hospital in the city
- you may need to stay in the city for many weeks
- if you live in a rural or remote area talk to your local health service about transport and/or accommodation
- you may want a support person to travel with you
- a support person for rural and remote patients can be approved under the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme in your state – in South Australia the travel scheme is called the Patient Assistance Transport Scheme (PATs)
- tell your support person that they may have to stay in the city for a long time as well
- always ask for an interpreter if you need one.

# What might happen if you are diagnosed with cancer

travel for treatment



go to hospital

## oncology ward

stay in the city



support person



if you live in a rural or remote area your local health service can arrange transport and/or accommodation



# How is cancer treated

Everyone is different and your doctor will talk to you about what treatment is best for you.

Sometimes more than one type of treatment is needed to slow down or stop the growth of cancer cells.

## **Some common treatments are:**

### **Surgery**

An operation to take out some or all of the cancer.

### **Chemotherapy**

A medicine to stop or slow down the cancer.

### **Radiotherapy**

A special type of X-ray is used to slow down or stop the cancer.

There are other treatments that your doctor may talk to you about - let the doctor know if you don't understand or need an Aboriginal Health Worker or Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer to help explain the information further.



# How is cancer treated

Your doctor will talk to you about what treatment is best for you.

## Some treatments are:

- an operation
- medicine (chemotherapy)
- a special type of X-ray (radiotherapy)

Let the doctor know if you don't understand or need an Aboriginal Health Worker or Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer to help explain the information further.





# How will the treatments make you feel

Some treatments may make you feel sick or lose your hair - this does not happen to everyone.

Everyone is different and it depends on your treatment and how your body reacts.

Some side effects may be:

- pain
- feeling tired
- not feeling hungry
- urinating (weeing) too often
- losing hair
- putting on weight
- nausea (feeling sick)
- skin rashes
- sores in your mouth
- constipation
- swollen arms or legs
- losing weight.

# How will the treatments make you feel

Some treatments may make you feel sick. If you don't feel well, talk to your doctor, Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer or nurse.



feeling sick



skin rashes



feeling tired



losing hair

- putting on weight or losing weight
- swollen arms or legs
- not going to the toilet or going too often
- sores in your mouth
- not feeling hungry.



## Taking care of yourself while you are having treatment

- get plenty of rest when you are tired
- eat healthy food like fruit and vegetables and bush tucker (small amounts often may help)
- drink more water and tea without sugar
- if you smoke, try to stop or cut down
- don't drink alcohol/grog
- do gentle exercise like walking
- talk to your family and friends
- talk to your doctor, Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer or nurse if you don't feel well.

# Taking care of yourself while you are having treatment

If you don't feel well, talk to your doctor, Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer or nurse.



stop or cut down smoking



eat healthy food regularly

get plenty of rest when you are tired

talk to your family or friends



no alcohol (grog)



light exercise like walking



# Who can help

**Many hospitals have Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers (AHLOs) who can help you with:**

- support for you and your family to understand how the hospital works
- interpreters
- transport and accommodation for rural and remote patients
- your stay in hospital (inpatient) or coming and going for appointments (outpatient).

## **Other help:**

- hospital social worker
- doctors treating you
- talk to your local health worker or health service if you are concerned about being away from home for a long time
- nurses looking after you
- family and friends
- Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20 (cost of a local call).

# Who can help

- Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officers (AHLOs)
- hospital social worker
- nurses looking after you
- doctors treating you
- family and friends
- Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20  
(cost of a local call)
- talk to your local health worker or health service  
if you are concerned about being away from home.





## Where to stay

- if you live in a rural or remote area you may have to stay in the city for many weeks while you are having treatment – your local health service can arrange accommodation and/or transport for you and your support person if needed
  - your health service can arrange a referral for rural or remote patients to Kanggawodli (Caring House) Ambulatory & Primary Health Care Service in Adelaide – contact details for Kanggawodli are tel: (08) 8342 2250 or fax (08) 8342 2260
  - you may choose to stay with family or friends
  - Cancer Council SA has accommodation for rural or remote patients that is reasonably priced – call Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20 for information
  - the Residential Wing of the Royal Adelaide Hospital has basic accommodation available with shared bathroom facilities – tel: (08) 8222 5169.
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# Where to stay

## You may need to stay in the city for many weeks for your treatment:

- if you live in a rural or remote area your local health service can arrange accommodation and transport for you and your support person
- Kanggawodli (Caring House) Ambulatory & Primary Health Care Service in Adelaide can provide accommodation for you and your support person if you live in a rural or remote area.

## Other accommodation options include:

- family and friends
- call Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20
- Residential Wing, Hospital Grounds, Royal Adelaide Hospital tel: (08) 8222 5169.

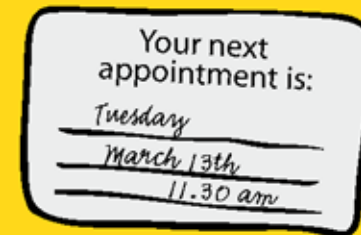


# Appointments

- you will be given an appointment card with the dates and times for your treatment or when you have to see a doctor
- you may need to see a few different doctors who will be arranging your treatment
- write down any questions about your medicine or treatment and ask the doctors or nurses
- talk to your local health service or AHLO if you need to confirm or change an appointment time.

# Appointments

- use your appointment card so you know when to see your doctor
- write down any questions and ask the doctors or nurses
- talk to your local health service or AHLO if you need to confirm or change an appointment time.





## Staying in hospital

**If you become sick during your treatment you may have to stay in hospital for a while.**

- phones are available next to your bed (you will need to buy a phone card)
- mobile phones may be used
- televisions are available (there is a cost to the patient).

**Visitors can help the doctors and nurses get you better by:**

- washing their hands before coming to see you
- not coming to see you if they have a cold or are unwell.

**Talk to the AHLO or nurses if you have any questions or problems.**

# Staying in hospital

**If you have to stay in hospital for a while:**

- phones are available (you will need to buy a phone card)
- mobile phones can be used
- televisions are available (there is a cost to the patient).

**Visitors can help you get better by:**

- washing their hands
- not visiting you in hospital if they are sick.

**Talk to the AHLO or nurses if you have any questions or problems.**





# What to bring with you from home

**You may need to bring all or some of the following:**

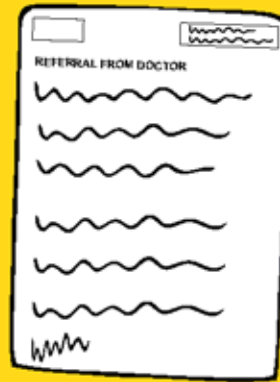
- referral (letter) from your doctor or health service
- X-rays and test results
- appointment cards
- Medicare card
- pension or concession card
- key card or bank book
- health care card
- BasicsCard (income management)
- drivers license
- money (cash)
- Patient Travel Assistance Scheme forms and paper work (for rural and remote patients)
- contact lenses, glasses or hearing aid
- wheelchair or walking frame (if you use one)
- name and telephone number of your local doctor and/or health service
- name and telephone number of your next of kin or carer.

# What to bring with you from home

Put your name on all items and do not bring anything valuable.



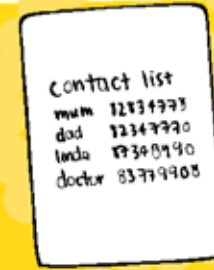
- drivers license
- health care card
- pension card
- Medicare card
- BasicsCard
- key card or bank book.



referral (letter) from doctor or health service



X-rays



contact details of your doctor, health service, next of kin or carer



Patient Travel Assistance Scheme paperwork



money



## What to bring with you from home

- medicines – bring everything you are taking including any bush or herbal medicine
- casual clothing such as a tracksuit
- some water to drink
- if you have young children, bring nappies, clothing and bottles
- toiletries including:
  - soap
  - toothbrush
  - toothpaste
  - denture cleaner (if required)
  - brush and comb
  - shaving gear
  - box of tissues.
- clothing and shoes (remember it may be colder in the city so bring some warm clothes)
  - pyjamas or nightie
  - dressing gown
  - non-slip footwear for slippers
  - warm socks
- a bag to put everything in.

Escorts or family travelling with a patient will need to bring clothing, personal items and any medication with them as well.

All personal items will need to have your name on them. Do not bring anything valuable.



# What to bring with you from home

Put your name on all items and do not bring anything valuable.



clothing



medicines



water




toiletries

bag for your belongings





## Going home

- your doctor or nurse will give you discharge information to take with you. Give this information to your local doctor or health service when you get home
  - you may be given medicine to take home with you – ask your doctor or nurse
  - if you are a rural or remote patient your doctor will need to fill in and sign your Patient Travel Assistance Scheme forms before you leave
  - tell your Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer or nurse if you need help when you get home
  - if you are a rural or remote patient the hospital or accommodation service will organise your travel arrangements
  - keep in touch with your local health service or doctor when you are home - it is important to tell them if you are not feeling well or if you need more medicine
  - talk to your friends or family about how you are going.
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# Going home

- ask your doctor or nurse if you need medicine to take home
- if you are a rural or remote patient make sure your doctor fills in and signs your Patient Travel Assistance Scheme forms before you leave
- tell your Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer or nurse if you need help when you get home
- if you are a rural or remote patient the hospital or accommodation service will organise your travel arrangements
- keep in touch with your local health service when you're at home - tell them if you are not well or need more medicine
- give your discharge information to your local health service when you get home
- talk to your friends or family about how you are.





## Staying healthy at home

- get plenty of rest when you are tired
- eat lots of fresh fruit, vegetables, pasta, rice, beans, wholemeal bread, fish, chicken, some lean red meat or bush tucker
- eat less fat, sugar and salt such as takeaway foods, chips, fried fish, pies, sausage rolls, cakes and biscuits
- drink more water or tea without sugar
- if you smoke, try to quit or cut down
- try not to drink soft drinks or alcohol
- keep active by doing some gentle exercise such as walking - be careful not to overdo it and get too tired.

# Staying healthy at home

get plenty of rest  
when you are tired



eat lots of healthy food



drink water and  
tea without sugar



do some exercise



**Quitline.**  
**13 7848**

stop or cut  
down smoking



eat less takeaway foods  
and try not to drink soft  
drinks or alcohol (grog)

# List of medical terms

There are many words to do with cancer that you might hear your doctor or nurse use. Here are the meanings of some common ones you may come across. More meanings can be found at [www.cancersa.org.au](http://www.cancersa.org.au) or contact Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20.

Always ask your doctor, nurse or Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer if you do not understand something or would like more information.

<b>Word</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Abnormality	Something that is not normal within the body.
Aggressive cancer	Fast-growing cancer.
Adjuvant treatment	Other treatments that help the main cancer treatment. For example, adjuvant radiotherapy or chemotherapy may be used before or after surgery to destroy any remaining cancer cells. Also called adjuvant therapy.
Anaesthetic	A local anaesthetic can be given to stop a person feeling pain at the actual site. It is usually given by a needle. A general anaesthetic will make you become unconscious (asleep) and would be used in an operation.
Benign	A lump that is not cancer.

# List of medical terms

Biopsy	A biopsy takes a small amount of tissue (cells) from the body. A needle biopsy, which can be done by your doctor, uses a thin needle to take cells for testing. An open biopsy (or surgical biopsy) is a small operation, and is usually done under general anaesthetic.
Blood test	Taking some blood, often from a vein in the arm, by using a thin needle.
Cancer	The general term used to describe cells that grow and spread around the body in an uncontrolled way.
Cells	Our bodies are made up of cells that are very small and can only be seen under a microscope. There are millions of cells in the body.
Chemotherapy	Medicine (drugs) used to kill cancer cells or slow down their growth (control cancer). Chemotherapy can also be used to help symptoms.
Complementary therapy	Other sorts of therapies that can be used with cancer treatment. This could be things like yoga, massage, meditation or acupuncture. You should tell your doctor if you are using bush medicine or any other complementary therapies.
CT scan (was called a CAT scan)	Using a special type of X-ray to take pictures inside the body to see what might be wrong.

# List of medical terms

Diagnosis	Working out what type of disease you have. Your doctor might need to do some tests to find out what is making you sick.
Endoscopy/ Bronchoscopy/ Colonoscopy	Looking inside the body using a thin, flexible tube with a light at the end. It can also be used to take some tissue for a biopsy or to remove small lumps.
Lymph nodes	These are small bean shaped structures in our bodies that help us keep well.
MRI	A test to get a number of pictures of part of a person's body. For this test you have to lie on a couch inside a metal cylinder that is open at both ends. It may take up to one hour to do, but is completely painless.
Malignant	Another word for cancer.
Metastasis	When cancer spreads from where it starts and travels to another place in the body.
Nausea	Feeling sick or like you are going to throw up.
Oncologist	A doctor who has special training in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.



# List of medical terms

Palliative Care	Special treatment that helps with symptoms, such as pain, but is not expected to cure the disease. It helps the patient to be comfortable and provides emotional and spiritual support.
Pathologist	A doctor who works out (makes a diagnosis) by doing laboratory tests such as examination of tissue and cells under a microscope.
PET scan	A special scan (X-ray) used to find tiny cells of cancer that normal X-rays can't see.
Primary site	The place in the body where cancer begins.
Radiologist	A doctor with special training in diagnosing diseases by looking at patient X-rays and scans.
Radiotherapy	This is treatment with high-energy rays (such as X-rays) to kill or stop cancer from growing.
Remission	After treatment the signs and symptoms of cancer can go away. Remission can last a short or long time and is not the same as a cure.
Side effects	Hair loss, tiredness and feeling sick are some side effects that may happen to someone who is being treated for cancer. Not everyone gets side effects. Side effects can be treated and usually do not last.

# List of medical terms

Social worker	Someone who can help the patient and their family. A social worker can provide information and help with things such as counselling, housing, legal and financial support.
Specialist	A doctor who has done many years of training and specialises in one area of medicine.
Surgery	When the doctor cuts something out of your body (an operation).
Symptoms	How you feel because you are sick. For example you might have a high temperature (fever) which tells you something is not right. It is important to tell the doctor or nurse how you are feeling.
Terminal	An illness is known as terminal when it cannot be cured and the patient is expected to pass away from that illness.
Tumour	A lump in the body that is not meant to be there. Tumours can be benign (not cancerous) or malignant (cancerous).
Ultrasound	A handheld scanner is moved over the skin. It uses sound waves to get a picture of inside the body. The pictures from the ultrasound can help diagnose cancer.
X-ray	A painless scan (picture) of the body that can show cancer or abnormalities.



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