

How we produce our information

All of our leaflets are produced by staff at The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre and this information is not sponsored or influenced in any way. Every effort is made to ensure that the information included in this leaflet is accurate and complete and we hope that it will add to any professional advice you have had. All our leaflets are evidence based where appropriate and they are regularly reviewed and updated. If you are concerned about your health in any way, you should consult your healthcare team.

We rely on a number of sources to gather evidence for our information. All of our information is in line with accepted national or international guidelines where possible. Where no guidelines exist, we rely on other reliable sources such as systematic reviews, published clinical trials data or a consensus review of experts. We also use medical textbooks, journals and government publications.

References for this leaflet can be obtained by telephoning 0151 556 5570.

If you need this leaflet in large print, Braille, audio or different language, please call 0151 556 5570.

If you have a comment, concern, compliment or complaint, please call 0151 556 5203.

The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre NHS Foundation Trust
Clatterbridge Road, Bebington,
Wirral, CH63 4JY.

Tel: 0151 556 5000
Web: www.clatterbridgecc.nhs.uk

Issue date: December 2022

Issue no: 1.0

Reference: LPHASKIN

Review date: December 2024

Skin care advice for patients on immunotherapy treatment

Chemotherapy, Immunotherapy,
and Supportive Medicines

A guide for patients and carers

Important

If you develop a skin rash which is not relieved with the simple methods discussed above, or you develop a skin itch which disrupts your sleep pattern, **then you must contact The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre for prompt assessment on 0800 169 5555 (available 24 hours, 7 days a week).**

Following the simple steps above and reporting symptoms early can lead to better management of this possible immunotherapy side effect.



Your skin is an important organ which works hard to protect you from the elements, diseases and infections. Therefore it's important that we take measures to look after it.

Immunotherapy treatments can cause inflammation throughout the body. For example, patients may experience skin inflammation as pigment changes, a rash and/or itchy skin.

What is a rash?

A rash is an area of irritated skin. It can be a side effect of some cancer treatments, such as immunotherapy. There can be many different symptoms of a rash, including red raised areas, red spots, and/or itching. Rashes tend to be mild to moderate. However, some people have severe rashes that cause major discomfort and changes to their appearance.

What should I do if I get a rash?

If you get a rash during immunotherapy treatment, you should avoid scratching it and seek advice via the The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre Hotline for assessment, as intervention may be required. This information can help your healthcare team make treatment decisions about your rash.

**The Clatterbridge Cancer Centre Hotline number:
0800 169 5555 (24 Hours)**

How is a rash treated?

For a mild rash we may recommend an over-the-counter or prescription-strength corticosteroid cream that you rub into the skin to reduce inflammation. If the rash is moderate or severe and covers a large part of the body, it may be treated with a corticosteroid to take by mouth, such as prednisolone. Antihistamine tablets can help with itching.

Your immunotherapy treatment may be stopped for a short time or adjusted to a lower dose.

If these steps don't work, your doctor may recommend that you see a dermatologist – a doctor who specializes in skin conditions.

Useful tips for keeping your skin healthy during immunotherapy treatment

- Eat a well-balanced diet. Aim for a good mix of foods rich in vitamins and minerals, combined with a protein, carbohydrates and a small amount of fat.
- Ensure you have an adequate fluid intake and avoid excessive alcohol intake.
- Ensure adequate sun protection. Wear a sun hat and sunglasses in hot weather and cover up. Apply sun cream with a high sun protection factor (SPF) and apply regularly throughout the day. Wear loose cotton clothing.

- Reduce or stop smoking, as smoking can cause damage to healthy tissue. There are many resources available to help you to stop smoking.
- Consider factors that may cause dry skin – reduce frequency of bathing and use lukewarm water to avoid exposing your skin to direct heat.
- Wash your skin and use a moisturiser. Avoid excessive scrubbing which may irritate your skin. Excessive washing strips the skin of essential oils which then dries it out.
- Bath oil and non-perfume emollients should be used as substitutes to standard soaps.
- Ensure non-perfumed moisturiser or emollients are used (e.g. cetaben/ E45) to keep skin well hydrated. Apply an emollient liberally and often, particularly shortly after bathing and if skin is itchy. The drier the skin, the thicker this should be, especially on the hands.
- Over the counter antihistamines can be used to manage a mild skin itch.

