

Free Prescriptions

All cancer patients undergoing treatment for cancer, the effects of cancer or the effects of cancer treatment can apply for an exemption certificate for a free prescription from their GP.

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand rub (special gel) available at the main entrance of the hospital and at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward or hospital. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand rub. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

If you require an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version please ask for assistance.

A guide to Complementary Therapies

Cancer Care and Haematology Units
Stoke Mandeville and Wycombe
Hospitals

Information for patients

Complementary therapies available **free** to ALL Cancer/Haematology Oncology patients and their relatives/carers

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

Our address and useful websites

Cancer Education, Information and Support Service Cancer Care and Haematology Unit Stoke Mandeville Hospital

Mandeville Road, Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP21 8AL
Tel: 01296 316954

Website: www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support

Tel: **0808 808 00 00**

Website: www.macmillan.org.uk

The Macmillan Cancer and Complementary Therapies booklet can be ordered free of charge.

Cancer Research UK

Tel: **0808 800 4040**

Website: www.cancerhelp.org.uk

Complementary and Alternative Therapies section available on the website.

Complementary therapies and cancer care

The Cancer Education, Information and Support Service provides a free complementary therapies service to all cancer/haematology oncology patients, and if appropriate and time allows, to their immediate relatives and carers. This leaflet will explain the different therapies available and answer questions you may have about complementary therapies and how to book a session.

The complementary therapy service is provided by experienced volunteers and available at the Cancer Care and Haematology Unit at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, and the Sunrise Cancer Unit at Wycombe Hospital. Therapies can also be undertaken, if appropriate, on the wards.

What are complementary therapies?

As the name implies, these therapies are designed to complement and be used alongside the normal medical treatments.

All complementary therapies are 'complementary' to a cancer patient's treatment and care and not a replacement for conventional treatment.

How may complementary therapies help?

Those who have had complementary therapies often say that it helps them feel relaxed, reduces anxiety, eases symptoms such as pain, nausea and poor sleeping patterns and improves their overall feeling of wellbeing.

Who are the therapists?

There are around 8 experienced qualified complementary Therapists. They provide free treatments to Cancer/ Haematology Oncology patients, and if appropriate and time allows, to immediate relatives and carers, at Stoke Mandeville and Wycombe Hospitals. Each therapist has an arranged day of the week and time when they attend. Most volunteer therapists provide a total of three hours of therapies per week or fortnight.

What types of therapies are available?

The therapists offer different therapies according to their qualifications. We have therapists giving therapies in aromatherapy, Indian head massage, massage, reflexology and reiki.

How long do therapies take?

Normally, a therapy using aromatherapy, massage, reflexology or reiki would take about an hour. An Indian head massage would usually take ½ an hour. However, it is possible to vary the length of the therapy to best suit the needs and wishes of the individual.

How can I book a therapy?

To book an appointment for a complementary therapy:

For Stoke Mandeville Hospital, contact the Cancer Education, Information and Support Office, Cancer Care & Haematology Unit in person or by phone – 01296 316954.

For Wycombe Hospital contact the Reception, Sunrise Cancer Unit in person or by phone – 01494 426244

Are complementary therapies safe?

Yes. Doctors, both at Stoke Mandeville and Wycombe and on a wider national and international level, encourage relaxing therapies to be used alongside conventional medical cancer care.

Therapies are often promoted as 'safe', 'gentle' or even 'natural' – but this does not mean they do not have their own side effects. You must tell the therapist if you have any allergies and/or if you have previously had complementary therapies and experienced side effects.

Therapies may not always be appropriate in all cases but all therapists carefully consider the individual's condition and adapt their therapy.

The therapist will explain the therapy, including the benefits and any side effects, and you will be advised on any after care that may be required.

If you experience side-effects and want to ask anything else related to your treatment please speak to your GP or oncologist for advice.

Where are the complementary therapies carried out?

In the complementary therapy room at the Cancer Care and Haematology Unit, Stoke Mandeville and the Sunrise Cancer Unit, Wycombe which are specifically for complementary therapies.

They are quiet rooms with a couch and all relevant facilities, such as hand washing, background music etc.

Alternatively, some therapies can take place in the treatment room areas whilst the patient is receiving his or her medical treatment, or if you were an inpatient the therapist will see you on a ward.

How many therapies can I have?

Our aim is to provide **up to four** therapies to cancer and haematology oncology patients. Therapies can fit in with your normal visits to the units, or alternatively at other times. By limiting the therapies to four per person we are able to accommodate more people. However, we aim to be flexible and individual needs will be taken into account wherever possible

If appropriate and time allows immediate relatives and carers may have a therapy.

Can I have more than four therapies?

After completing your fourth therapy the complementary therapist will give you an evaluation form to complete and return.

The complementary therapist will also assess your needs and decide if you would benefit from having any further therapies.

What does it involve?

During your first visit the therapist will ask general questions about your health, lifestyle and medical history, (including sleep patterns, diet, allergies and how you feel emotionally). You will be asked about any symptoms, what medicines you are taking and any side effects. You must always tell the therapist about any health problems and medicines you take. Complementary therapies may not be suitable for everyone.

The therapist will explain the therapy, including the benefits and any side effects. You will then be asked to sign a consent form to say you are happy for the therapy to go ahead.

What therapies are available?

Aromatherapy provides a massage therapy in which aromatic or sweet smelling plant oils are used to enhance the relaxing effects of the "hands on" massage. The plant oils are selected to best suit your needs, with various oils providing relaxation, uplift, release of muscle tension, and may help alleviate stress and anxiety. A full body aromatherapy massage can be provided or it can be used on individual areas such as hands or feet. Some clothing may need to be removed for this therapy.

Indian head massage provides a relaxing and soothing massage to those areas of the body which most often carry tension – namely the upper back, neck, shoulders, upper arms, scalp and face. It may also be used to relieve headaches, eye strain and tension. The massage can be given either through clothes or with minimal removal of upper clothing. You will usually be sitting down for this therapy. Wigs would need to be removed if a full head massage is required.

Massage is a relaxing "hands on" massage therapy. This may be the whole body, lying on a massage couch. Alternatively, it can be modified to massage certain parts of the body as best suits your needs. For example, massaging the back, shoulders and neck, arms or legs. Massage may help to release tension, alleviate stress and anxiety and encourage relaxation.

Some clothing may need to be removed for this therapy.

Reflexology is a relaxing therapy, focusing on the feet. It is believed that the various areas of the feet relate to equivalent body areas, for example, the toes relate to the head. The feet are first massaged and then the different areas of the feet are worked to help balance the energy within the body. This helps to relieve stress and tension. Only shoes and socks (or equivalent) need to be removed. Reflexology can take place in the complementary therapy room or in the treatment room areas.

Reiki comes from Rei, meaning universal and Ki, meaning Life Force Energy. This vital life force nourishes all life - people, animals and plants. In a Reiki therapy, the practitioner places his or her hands on or just above you. It is believed to channel and recharge the vital life force energy, helping restore balance and improve the body's ability to heal itself. Benefits may be felt in both the physical body and in attitude, providing calm and helping the mind to focus on positive thoughts.

During a therapy some people feel heat, cold, tingling sensations or sometimes nothing at all, but most feel calm and relaxed at the end of a therapy. Some have a burst of energy and need to relax as the body adjusts. You would remain fully clothed.