

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.



Buckinghamshire Healthcare
NHS Trust

'The content provided in this leaflet is compliant with the cancer standards and keyworker documentation. All leaflets are updated whenever necessary or on the review date shown below'

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
Follow us on Twitter @buckshealthcare

Understanding Gynaecological Cancers

Information for Patients
with a gynaecological cancer and their carers

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

Safe & compassionate care,

every time

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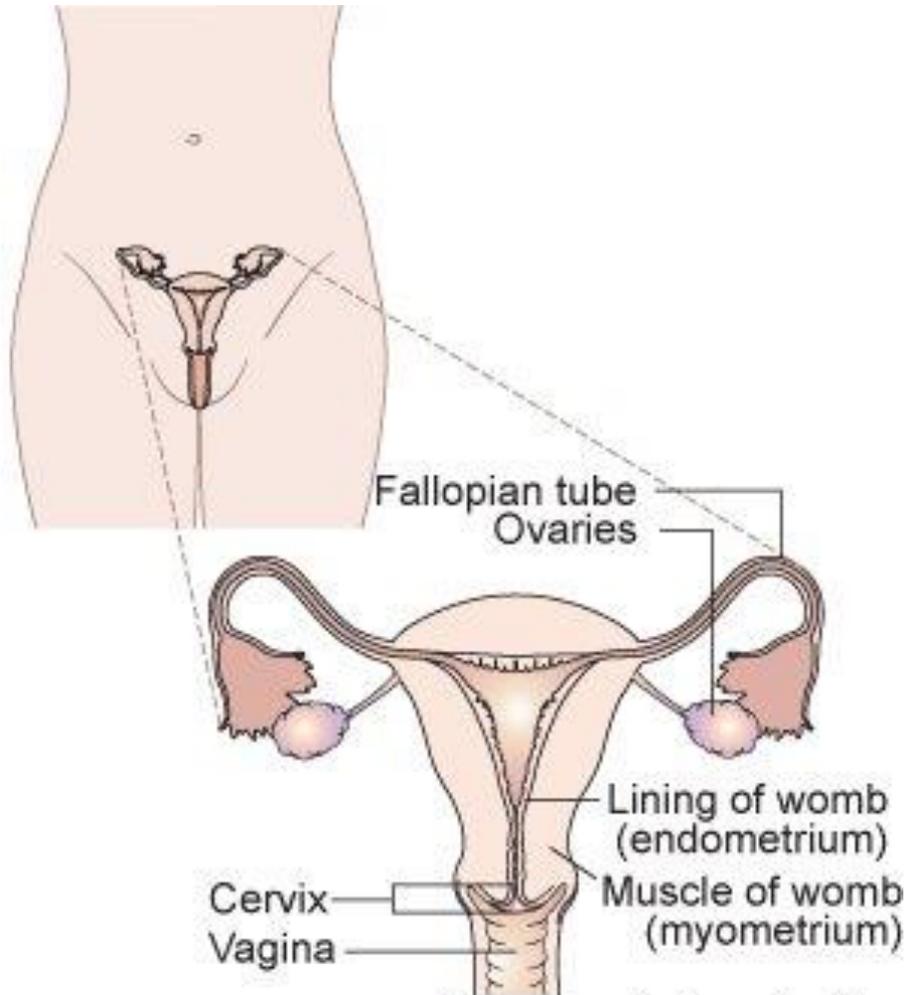


Diagram showing the parts of the female reproductive system
Copyright © CancerHelp UK

Other useful websites:

Jo's cervical cancer trust

16 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3ED

Tel: 020 7936 7498

Website: www.jostrust.org.uk

Ovarian Cancer Action

8-12 Camden High Street, Camden Town, London NW1 0JH

Tel: 0300 4564700

Website: www.ovarian.org.uk

Target Ovarian Cancer

2 Angel Gate, London EC1V 2PT

Tel: 020 7923 5470

Website: www.targetovariancancer.org.uk

Maggies Centre

Churchill Hospital, Old Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 7LJ

Tel: 01865 225690

Email: oxford@maggiescentres.org

Cancer Care and Haematology Unit

Stoke Mandeville Hospital

Mandeville Road, Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP21 8AL

Tel: 01296 316954

Website: www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

High Wycombe & District Citizens Advice Bureau

Drop in advice available on certain days and telephone advice daily on weekdays. Office at 8 Easton Street, High Wycombe

Tel: 0844 4994108

Website: www.adviceguide.org.uk

Iain Rennie Hospice at Home – Nursing at Home Service

A free service to patients and families that works alongside your GP to support your care needs at home.

Tel: Tring 01442 890222 or Chalfont St Giles 01494 877200

Website: www.irhh.org

Marie Curie Cancer Care

Run hospice centres and community nursing services to support cancer patients at home. Can offer care at night service in most areas.

Tel: 0207 599 7777

Website: www.mariecurie.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support

A Cancer Support Service that offers confidential advice with an interpreting service for non-English speakers. They also provide a range of additional booklets they may be helpful.

Freephone: 0808 808 00 00

Website: <http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Home.aspx>

Winston's Wish

Provide resources to help children of families coping with cancer and loss.

Tel: 08452 03 04 05

Website: www.winstonswish.org.uk

Ovacome

PO Box 68599, London EC1P 1DE

Tel: 020 7299 6654

Website: www.ovacome.org.uk

How to use this booklet

Not all the sections included here may relate directly to you. However, the information provided may be useful at different times for both you and those caring for you.

This booklet can therefore be referred to as required throughout your care.

As you read the information enclosed, do make a note of any questions that arise and feel free to contact your gynaecology oncology nurse to discuss them.

My diagnosis is:

My treatment plan is:

What is cancer?

Cancer is a term used to describe a growth of abnormal cells. Sometimes these abnormal cells grow at a much quicker rate than normal cells. The abnormal cells stick together and form a cluster/growth. **Doctors call this abnormal cluster of cells a 'tumour'**. If the abnormal cells first start growing in the ovary, as an example, it is called a **malignant primary ovarian tumour**. If some of the abnormal ovarian cells break off and travel in the blood or lymphatic circulation, they may start to grow in other areas of the body, eg in the abdomen or pelvis. This new growth is called **secondary tumour or metastasis**.

Types of Gynaecology cancer

There are different types of gynaecological cancer. These include :

- Cancer of the Ovary
- Primary Peritoneal
- Cancer of the Fallopian Tube
- Cancer of the Womb
- Cancer of the Cervix
- Cancer of the Vulva
- Cancer of the Vagina

The Gynaecology Oncology Team

During investigations and once you have been diagnosed with a gynaecological cancer a **Multi Disciplinary Team meeting** brings together all the specialists involved in your care. This meeting focuses on your diagnosis and begins to discuss the treatment plan most appropriate for you.

This meeting takes place every Thursday and the outcome of the meeting will then be shared and discussed with you at an Outpatient consultation.

Financial Help & Advice

Due to your illness your income may have gone down and you may need financial help. **The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will be able to advise you**. The DWP provides state benefits, grants and loans.

Benefit Enquiry Line

Provides information and advice about social security benefit entitlements.

Freephone: 0800 88 22 00

Once you have your application form, questions regarding Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Attendance Allowance (AA) applications can be discussed by ringing the number below:

Freephone: 08457 123456

How do I find out more?

Age Concern Buckinghamshire - Information, support and advice for those over the age of 65 offering contacts for a wide range of useful services.

Available 9am – 4pm weekdays Monday – Friday.

Tel: 01296 431911

Website: www.ageconcernbucks.org.uk

Email: acb@ageconcernbucks.org.uk

Cancer Research UK

For clear and easy to understand information about cancer and cancer treatments and answers to questions about cancer through a confidential support line.

Available Monday - Friday 9am- 5pm

Free phone: 0808 800 4040

Website: www.cancerhelp.org.uk

Can I Travel?

If you are travelling long distances by rail or air, advise the operator when booking your seats, as additional help is often available to you. You will need **travel insurance** when travelling abroad. This can often be expensive and it is advisable to shop around for the best deal (it is usually cheaper 6 months after completion of last treatment). **Ask your GP for advice if you are travelling with drugs, particularly morphine, as you may require a covering letter.**

Practical Help

Free Prescriptions - All cancer patients are now entitled to free prescriptions. Please complete a form provided by your GP so that you can access this as soon as possible.

Social Services - Information and advice will be available from your local social services department and if you meet certain criteria, a range of services will be open to you. These may include: personal care, meals, laundry, equipment to use at home (a financial charge may be made for some services).

To find out more about Social Services contact:

Aylesbury Office 01296 395000

High Wycombe Office 01494 475000

Blue Badge Application - You may well be entitled to a blue disabled badge for parking the car. To apply for a blue badge contact Bucks County Council on 01296 382902 or apply on line via the Bucks County Council Website.

The members of this team include your gynaecology consultant, oncologist, a pathologist, a radiologist and your gynaecology cancer nurse specialist.

Hospital Admissions

Gynaecological surgery is carried out at Stoke Mandeville Hospital and patients recover on ward 16b. Some patients are referred to the Gynae-Oncology Surgeons at The Churchill Hospital, Oxford.

Our Gynaecology Cancer Team

Name	Specialty	Location	Contact details (Secretaries)
Miss Agnieszka Bil	Gynae/Oncology	Wycombe Hospital	01494-425009
Miss Geraldine Tasker	Gynae/Oncology	Stoke Mandeville	01296-316163
Dr.Sally Trent	Oncology	Stoke Mandeville	01296-316555
Dr Saeed Rafii	Gynae/Oncology	Stoke Mandeville	01296-316555
Dr Sheryl Sim	Gynae/Oncology	Wycombe Mandeville	01494-426258
Clinical Nurse Specialists	Gynae/oncology	The Churchill Hospital, Oxford	01865-235355
Megan Ejikeme and Sarah Gaughan	Clinical Nurse Specialist	Wycombe/ Stoke Mandeville	01296-316863 (answer phone)

Treatments for Gynaecology Cancer

What treatment will I be offered? In general there are three types of treatment used in the management of gynaecology cancer:

- **Surgery**
- **Chemotherapy (drug treatment)**
- **Radiotherapy (X-ray treatment)**

As described previously the type of treatment offered will depend on a number of factors, including how advanced your cancer is and your fitness to undergo the treatment. There are individual information booklets available which will be given to you at your time of diagnosis. **Should you have questions about your treatment following an appointment then feel free to call your gynaecology cancer nurse specialist also known as your key worker, to discuss any concerns you may have.**

Surgery for Gynaecological Cancers

Types of hysterectomy - There are different types of hysterectomy. The operation that you have depends on the type of cancer you have and its stage and grade. The stage of your cancer describes its size and whether it has spread. The grade is how the cells look when examined under a microscope. This gives an idea of how the cancer may behave.

Why women may have a hysterectomy - A hysterectomy is one of the main treatments for cancers of the:

- ovary
- womb
- cervix
- fallopian tubes.

Creative Arts –a group running at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, designed to provide a recreational, relaxing and general art session for cancer patients and their carers.

‘Lavender Girls’ –a gynae-oncology patient support group which meets once a month on a Tuesday from 10am to 12pm. Includes group discussions and/or a talk /activity from a healthcare professional on a topic of the groups choice eg relaxation techniques, creative arts, diet and nutrition, make-up etc.

Moving on with Confidence - This is a six week course for people after cancer treatment.

It is aimed at helping you cope and adjust better to life after your cancer treatment with more confidence and to move on.

More information and how to book any of these services are enclosed in your ‘Cancer Information Pack’, or alternatively telephone: 01296 316954 for further details.

The Clinical Psychology Service - A clinical psychology service is available for you and your family. A referral to this service can be arranged through your gynaecology nursing team. The service offers an opportunity to talk one to one with a psychologist.

The Cancer Education, Information and Support Service

Offer information and support to anyone who has concerns about cancer, their relatives, friends and carers. The team ensure that people affected by cancer have access to good quality, comprehensive and appropriate information and support.

The service is staffed by health professionals and supported by trained volunteers. Some of our volunteers have personal experience of living with cancer.

The service can put you in touch with complementary therapists, Citizens Advice Bureau advisors, and other local and national support groups. Services include:

Complementary therapies - include Indian head massage, aromatherapy, massage and reflexology, and as the name suggests can be used alongside your conventional treatment programme. Our therapists are all volunteers and highly trained.

Welfare Benefits Advisor - (funded by Macmillan).

We have a Benefits advisor that works at Stoke Mandeville on Thursday and Friday each week. They work within the Citizen Advice Bureau and offers independent advice relating to benefits, employment, pensions and housing. They can also help in completing application forms for grants and benefits.

Wig supply and fitting service

Some cancer treatments can cause hair loss or thinning. We have a contract with Raoul wig makers who supply and fit wigs or headwear on alternate Friday mornings at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in the Cancer Education Information and Support area and Monday afternoons at Wycombe Hospital in the Sunrise Cancer Unit.

Women with vaginal cancer may sometimes need a hysterectomy if their cancer has spread further. Cancers of these organs are sometimes called gynaecological cancers.

Surgery is usually carried out in specialist cancer centres or units by surgeons who are experts in this type of operation. Sometimes treatment is a combination of surgery, chemotherapy/ radiotherapy, depending on your type of cancer, stage and grade.

You will be given an individualised treatment plan, and further detailed information following the Multidisciplinary Team Meeting or Consultation with your Gynae-oncology Surgeon.

Chemotherapy for Gynaecological Cancers

Chemotherapy is a general term for the treatment of cancer **using drugs**. The drugs that are used are designed to kill off cancer cells while causing less damage to normal cells. There are many different types of chemotherapy drugs which can be used on their own or, more commonly, in combinations. **Patients with different types of gynaecological cancer are likely to receive different combinations of chemotherapy drugs.**

Chemotherapy is, in general, administered as an outpatient at Wycombe, Stoke Mandeville and/or the Churchill Hospital. The length of treatment varies depending on the type of drugs to be used and the type of gynaecological cancer.

If it is felt that chemotherapy would be the most appropriate treatment for you, then you would be referred to a **Consultant Oncologist**.

Our Consultant Oncologists are based at the Churchill Hospital, Oxford but they have regular weekly clinics at the Outpatient departments at Wycombe or Stoke Mandeville.

If you and your oncologist decide that chemotherapy is the right treatment for you then you will be given written information about each drug and the possible side effects. These side effects and your care during the treatment will be explained in detail before the treatment begins. You will have plenty of time to ask questions and even though you will sign a consent form for the treatment you can choose to stop the treatment at anytime.

Useful Contact Telephone Numbers for the Chemotherapy Units

Hospital Site	Telephone Number
Cancer Care and Haematology Unit, Room 10, Stoke Mandeville	01296 315125
Sunrise Chemo Unit, Ward 5A, Wycombe Hospital	01494 426238
Radiotherapy Department, Churchill Hospital	01865 235565 (Reception)

Radiotherapy for Gynaecology Cancer

External radiotherapy - This is given by directing painless high-energy beams at the area of the cancer, while doing as little harm as possible to normal cells.

Radiotherapy works by killing cancer cells and can be used on its own to treat cancer though it may also be given as part of a combined treatment with chemotherapy.

Throughout your diagnosis, treatment and afterwards, try to accept that these reactions are normal. If you feel you need to, allow yourself time to cry. This can often be a helpful way of dealing with bottled up emotions. Learning a relaxation technique can also be very helpful as it can help you switch off your mind from worries and also relax your body.

How do I tell the children?

If you have children it may seem natural to try and protect them from the news. Even if they have not been told about the diagnosis, **it is not unusual for children to know from the reactions of others that something is wrong.** Occasionally when children are not included in the diagnosis in some way, their imaginations can take over. This can be more frightening for them than the truth. It is therefore recommended that children are given time to talk about the changes that are happening around them.

It can be helpful to explain to children that it is normal for them to experience some strong emotions and you may notice some changes in their behaviour. It is important for them to discuss any worries with you openly. Sometimes taking them to hospital visits and introducing them to staff can help reduce some of their fears.

There are a number of very useful books, which have been written specifically for children on the subject of cancer in the family. A list of reading material for children is available from Macmillan Cancer Support and Winston's Wish. The specialist nursing team can also access some useful information. (See page 17 for website information)

If you have concerns about changes in a child's behaviour or emotional state, it may be also useful to discuss things with your GP. Our Macmillan Clinical Psychologist can also help with family counselling.

Coping with a diagnosis of Cancer

Being diagnosed with cancer can be a deeply distressing event for you and those close to you. It may feel as though life has been turned upside down as the word cancer is often linked with fears about treatment in a hospital, and sometimes a shortened future and the possibility of dying. **Fear of the unknown and uncertainty about the future can be very stressful.**

The news of a gynaecological cancer may arrive as a bolt out of the blue, or you may have had suspicions about symptoms for quite a while. Even so, the news can be devastating and can cause a range of emotions, which may come to the surface at different times in the days, weeks and months following your diagnosis. Such emotions may include:

- a period of numbness
- disbelief
- shock
- extreme sadness
- anger
- guilt
- feelings of helplessness and fear.

Feelings such as those described above are very common, when faced with a crisis. They are not signs of being unable to cope. It is entirely normal to experience a range of strong and sometimes, uncontrollable emotions after a diagnosis. **There is no right or wrong way to feel**, try not to add to your distress by feeling guilty about how you feel or about the diagnosis.

You may find that some situations trigger more anxiety, eg attending hospital appointments, reading about gynaecological cancer in the newspaper or watching a programme on television. Future treatments and tests may also increase your anxiety.

Radiotherapy may also be delivered internally, directly to the top of your vagina or cervix depending on your cancer. This is called brachytherapy.

Specially trained staff use highly specialised equipment to deliver the radiotherapy. To receive this treatment you will need to go to the **Churchill Hospital in Oxford.**

If it is felt that radiotherapy would be helpful you will be referred to a **Consultant Oncologist**, who will see you at Wycombe or Stoke Mandeville hospital before a decision is made to proceed to treatment.

The side effects of this treatment and how it will be given will be explained to you in detail. You will have plenty of time to ask questions and even though you will sign a consent form for the treatment you can choose to stop the treatment at anytime.

The contact telephone number for the Reception at the Radiotherapy Department at the Churchill is 01865 235465.

During your treatment your care team may include:

General Practitioner - Your GP provides support and treatment to you in the community at any stage of your care and will remain your primary medical carer throughout your care.

Gynaecology Cancer Nurses (CNS) - They specialise in the care and support of patients with gynaecological cancers, and will be assigned as your Key Worker. They work at Wycombe and Stoke Mandeville Hospital, they attend clinics and will also visit patients on the wards.

Oncologist - These doctors specialise in treating cancer and provide treatment in radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

Radiologist - A doctor who undertakes and reports x-rays, MRI, and CT and perform CT guided biopsies and ultra sounds.

Community Specialist Palliative Care Nurses/Iain Rennie

Nurses - They offer specialist advice, emotional support, symptom control, and information to cancer patients and their carers. They do not provide 'hands on care' but will visit and offer advice and support to you and your family at home. Iain Rennie nurses are not available in the Aylesbury area - this is covered by the Community Specialist Palliative Care Nurses. Referral is via your Consultant, Specialist Nurse or GP. If you have been referred the numbers are as follows:
Wycombe and South Bucks Team - 01494 877200
Aylesbury area - 01296 332600
(based at Florence Nightingale Hospice)
Tring area - 01442 890444

Dietitian - If you have problems with your dietary intake, appetite or maintaining your weight, nurses at each point of your treatment can advise you on maximum nutrition. There is a Macmillan dietitian who you can be referred to after an initial assessment of your needs.

Research Nurses - They are involved in supporting patients who choose to participate in clinical trials. They work closely with our Oncologists and will see patients during clinic appointments.

If you would like information about a particular trial please ask your oncologist or your gynaecology cancer nursing team, or visit www.macmillan.org.uk or Target Ovarian Cancer at www.targetovariancancer.org.uk

District Nurses (DN) - They provide the nursing support you need at home. You can access your DN via your GP or through a referral by your specialist nurse.

What Happens After Treatment?

Regardless of the treatment you are offered, once this has been completed you will continue to be reviewed regularly in the clinic by your oncologist. Your Gynaecology Oncology Nurse Specialist is usually present at your clinic appointments.

If you feel you need to see your consultant sooner than your booked appointment then do talk this through with your specialist nurse who may be able to arrange this.

For advice and support throughout your treatment and care contact your gynaecological oncology nursing team who are available Monday to Friday, 9am – 4pm. The nursing team are busy in clinics on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays but an answer machine is in place at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, and messages can be accessed from Wycombe Hospital. Please leave your name and a contact number and we will get back to you as soon as we can - although this may not always be on the same working day.

A Nurse Led clinic is available via appointment in the Cancer Care and Haematology Unit (CCHU) at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, for patients to come and discuss their problems/concerns. The CNS will telephone you beforehand to discuss what they can offer in the clinic and to book an appointment at a convenient time.

Nurse Specialist Holistic Assessment

In order to help us support you in the best way possible we will, at regular intervals, be offering you a formal opportunity to talk about any particular worries or concerns you may have. We use a form called a 'Distress Thermometer' and this is structured in a way that highlights the many different worries people can experience. All of them are areas that you can share with the gynaecological nursing team.