The Emotional Impact of a Blood Cancer

A Guide for Patients

Leukaemia Care
YOUR Blood Cancer Charity
Introduction

Being diagnosed with a blood cancer can be a shock and you may find the information in this booklet useful. Every person is different. You may experience all of the emotions in the booklet, some of them or none of them at all. If you are unsure about anything in this booklet, speak with your doctor.

This booklet describes some of the more challenging emotional responses you may experience as you adjust to life following a diagnosis of blood cancer. As you gradually adjust to this major change in your life, you will find what is most helpful and feels right for you.

This booklet was compiled by Anne Crook and peer reviewed by Dr Robert Marcus and Dr Steve Knapper. We are also grateful to Julie Quigley, Helen Laude and Gary Hunter for their contributions as patient reviewers. The booklet has since been updated by our Patient Information Writer Isabelle Leach.

If you would like any information on the sources used for this booklet, please email communications@leukaemiacare.org.uk for a list of references.
In this booklet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this booklet</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About Leukaemia Care</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety and worry</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss and depression</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope and determination</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a blood cancer patient during COVID-19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A new normal</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful contacts and further support</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About Leukaemia Care

Leukaemia Care is a national charity dedicated to ensuring that people affected by blood cancer have access to the right information, advice and support.

Our services

Helpline
Our helpline is available 8:30am – 5:00pm Monday - Friday and 7:00pm – 10:00pm on Thursdays and Fridays. If you need someone to talk to, call 08088 010 444.

Alternatively, you can send a message via WhatsApp on 07500068065 on weekdays 9:00am – 5:00pm.

Nurse service
We have two trained nurses on hand to answer your questions and offer advice and support, whether it be through emailing nurse@leukaemiacare.org.uk or over the phone on 08088 010 444.

Patient Information Booklets
We have a number of patient information booklets like this available to anyone who has been affected by a blood cancer. A full list of titles – both disease specific and general information titles – can be found on our website at www.leukaemiacare.org.uk/support-and-information/help-and-resources/information-booklets/

Support Groups
Our nationwide support groups are a chance to meet and talk to other people who are going through a similar experience. For more information about a support group local to your area, go to www.leukaemiacare.org.uk/support-and-information/support-for-you/find-a-support-group/

Buddy Support
We offer one-to-one phone support with volunteers who have had blood cancer themselves or been affected by it in some
way. You can speak to someone who knows what you are going through. For more information on how to get a buddy call 08088 010 444 or email support@leukaemiacare.org.uk

Online Forum
Our online forum, www.healthunlocked.com/leukaemia-care, is a place for people to ask questions anonymously or to join in the discussion with other people in a similar situation.

Patient and carer conferences
Our nationwide conferences provide an opportunity to ask questions and listen to patient speakers and medical professionals who can provide valuable information and support.

Website
You can access up-to-date information on our website, www.leukaemiacare.org.uk.

Campaigning and Advocacy
Leukaemia Care is involved in campaigning for patient well-being, NHS funding and drug and treatment availability. If you would like an update on any of the work we are currently doing or want to know how to get involved, email advocacy@leukaemiacare.org.uk

Patient magazine
Our magazine includes inspirational patient and carer stories as well as informative articles by medical professionals: www.leukaemiacare.org.uk/communication-preferences/
Feelings

When you receive a diagnosis of blood cancer, you may initially feel numb or be in shock. However, you will later experience what is sometimes described as a rollercoaster of feelings and emotions, which can hit you any time.

Following your diagnosis, you will face the prospect of treatment, a recovery period and an adjustment to life with a blood cancer. You may experience a number of feelings and emotions which can come out of the blue and sometimes overwhelm you. These feelings may come and go. Sometimes you feel positive and ready to cope, whilst at other times you may be uncertain of what you feel.

Most people with a blood cancer diagnosis experience any of the following feelings and emotions:

- Anxiety and worry
- Anger
- Stress
- Loneliness
- Sadness
- Loss and depression

All these feelings are common and completely normal in your situation. You are reacting to a major life event which brings uncertainty and difficulties. Most people in your situation have the same set of feelings to a lesser or greater degree. This is why patients with blood cancer are recommended to talk to a healthcare worker who understands your condition, or to join a support group with others who have also been affected by a blood cancer.

Understanding your feelings and developing ways to deal with them will help you move forward with your life.
Anxiety and worry

Anxiety is an uneasy feeling with elements of fear and worry. It is a perfectly normal reaction and can be mild or severe. It comes from being faced with a stressful situation; our fight-or-flight system is activated by the hypothalamus, which is an area of the brain which is the command centre of the involuntary body functions such as breathing, blood pressure and heartbeat.

The hypothalamus regulates the body’s autonomic nervous system which is composed of two systems:

1. Sympathetic nervous system which speeds up the body’s functions and triggers the fight-or-flight response.

2. Parasympathetic nervous system which acts like a brake to the body’s functions promoting a rest and recovery to calm the body down.

As part of the fight-or-flight response, the sympathetic nervous system activates the adrenal glands (small glands on the top of the kidneys) which release adrenaline into the blood to speed up the body’s functions. Adrenaline causes the heart to beat faster, increasing the pulse rate and blood pressure. The airways are widened and the breathing rate increases so as much oxygen as possible is available for the muscles and brain. Also, the release of blood sugar is triggered to supply energy to all the body.

These changes by the sympathetic nervous system are so quick that most people are not aware of them.

Once the adrenaline surge decreases, a second component of the stress response to maintain the function of the sympathetic nervous system involves a cascade of hormones generated by the hypothalamus.

These hormones include:

- Corticosteroids
- Oestrogen
- Testosterone
- Dopamine and serotonin (neurotransmitters which control our mood and how we react to stress)

While these changes are helpful if you are escaping a physical
danger such as a fire in your house, they are not helpful when your brain is thinking about a stressful life event such as a diagnosis in the same way. When the fight-or-flight response is not dampened down by calming thoughts or coping mechanisms, its effects may even lead to a panic attack.

Your anxiety is a natural reaction when you have a blood cancer because you are living with an uncertainty. You will be asking yourself what will happen, will the treatment pathway work or will the blood cancer come back after treatment. Since you cannot physically run away, those same fight-or-flight symptoms persist and make you feel uncomfortable. Unchecked anxiety results in lying awake at night with your mind worrying about the blood cancer. This in turn leads to your heart racing, a tightening in your chest and a tensing of your muscles.

Worry and anxiety come from not knowing what the outcome of your blood cancer will be. Worrying can help if it leads you to take action to resolve a problem. However, once your anxiety has ensured you keep your appointments and follow your treatment plan, then it is no longer helpful. Awareness of the fight-or-flight response can help you ignore the symptoms without reacting. Being in the present rather than thinking of what may happen in the future will stop needless anxiety. The future has not happened yet, and what you’re worrying about may never happen.

If you notice you are thinking about the future with your blood cancer and getting nervous, you need to try to ignore or change your thought pattern. It is natural to try and predict future events so you can prepare yourself for the worst and make arrangements for your loved ones. However, these thoughts and plans keep your attention focused on your blood cancer and keep the anxiety going.

Feeling worried or anxious is a normal reaction and it will gradually get better as you become used to your situation. Coping with symptoms of anxiety requires practice and does
not mean that you are weak or unable to cope. Your consultant and clinical nurse specialist will be able to guide you about any physical symptoms that you need to watch out for, which may help you to ignore or cope with any other worries.

For patients with blood cancer where watch and wait is the best option, there is the added worry of knowing that you have to wait for the onset of symptoms which may or may not come.

You may find it helpful to talk to your healthcare team. There is more information about anxiety and helpful links on the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxietydepression/Pages/low-mood-stress-anxiety.

Leukaemia Care offers nationwide support groups for people affected by a diagnosis of a blood cancer. Visit www.leukaemiacare.org.uk or call 0808 010 444 to find out more and to find your nearest support group.
Anger

When challenged or threatened, most people experience anger as a normal emotional response. It is not unusual for the diagnosis of a serious illness to provoke an angry response and does not mean that you are not coping.

Anger is one of the body’s fundamental responses to a perceived threat to you or your loved ones. Anger and anxiety can be considered as separate emotional responses to a threatening situation as part of preparing the body for fight or flight, respectively. It is thought that anger is a response that occurs to a clearly identifiable threat, whereas anxiety is a response to an unpredictable situation.

When attacked, we often experience anger which stimulates powerful and aggressive feelings, enabling us to fight. The fight reaction can encourage you to stand up for yourself and can be necessary for your survival. By definition, the fight or flight response system does not engage the rational mind but thrusts you into an attack or flee mode. If you are under threat from situations which do not bring immediate danger, you can choose to respond and not react.

Accepting your anger can help you to make positive changes. Finding out what you are angry about is the first step in accepting and dealing with your anger. You may be angry at yourself or your body for becoming ill, or the healthcare professionals who are giving you instructions which are difficult and take away control over your life. You may be angry at the time your treatment pathway is taking, the number of appointments and tests you need to have or the amount of time you need to recover from it all.

You may be angry at the injustice of why it is you that has a blood cancer. Feeling angry may make you feel uneasy or irritated. Some people can let their anger out by ranting and raving, while others find letting their anger out quite difficult. It may cause them to feel restless and frustrated, and they express it as irritability or impatience with others.

Acknowledging your anger rather
than trying to repress it and letting it build up will prevent your anger from bursting out and leaving you helpless and out of control.

If your anger is building up, remove yourself from the environment where you are by going outside, taking a walk, doing something physical or spiritual such as running or mindfulness. You could also put your thoughts of anger down on paper, so you can let them out and review them later. It is always helpful to recognise the thoughts that make you angry, so you can channel the anger into activities that give you more control, such as setting yourself recovery goals or talking to someone who can help you put things into perspective.
Being stressed when you have blood cancer is normal and can rarely be avoided. Coming to terms with your diagnosis is stressful in itself; however, there are a number of solutions that may relieve your stress:

**Physical options**

Exercise is extremely good for relieving stress. As well as increasing your levels of serotonin, which contribute to wellbeing and happiness, exercise also reduces the excess adrenaline you have from feeling anxious and angry. Enjoyment should be the main goal of exercising. All types of exercise such as walking, gentle jogging, keeping fit or dancing classes, housework or gardening are appropriate. It is important to match your exercise to your level of fitness.

An activity that you enjoy can help you stay in the present moment and appreciate life in the now, rather than looking ahead and trying to predict the future. Any activity that works for you, such as pastimes and hobbies that were important to you before your diagnosis, are ideal. Keeping your interests going will bring you enjoyment and a feeling that your blood cancer is not changing your life too much.

Relaxation and breathing exercises can help to calm the mind and release muscle tension. A number of disciplines which combine exercise and relaxation such as tai chi and yoga can help. Tai chi involves a sequence of gentle flowing movements that combine breathing, movement and awareness exercises with meditation. Yoga is a mixture of stretching and postures with elements of breathing and meditation. Practiced regularly, these disciplines reduce stress and anxiety and improve overall physical and emotional wellbeing.

**Social and psychological options**

It is good to socialise with people you want to see and talk about what you feel comfortable with. If you start feeling emotional or if you don't want to talk about something, it is okay to change
the subject. They will understand.

It is also helpful to connect with people who have been affected by blood cancer and are facing similar experiences to you. You can do this by joining a support group or an online forum. Even though each person’s experience is unique, it can help to hear from others who know what it is like to have a blood cancer and how they are handling things.

Talking about your thoughts and feelings to someone who is a good listener can make them feel less disturbing. When we can verbalise our feelings, it is easier to rationalise and put them into perspective. If you prefer, you can commit your thoughts and feelings to paper. This will help you concentrate on specific issues that keep going around in your mind. You can tackle specific issues that you might be able to do something about or maybe realise that there is an issue that you can’t prepare for or might never happen.

Counselling which involves talking through your experience to try and make sense of it all can be of support in many ways. It is often helpful talking in confidence to someone you don’t know to allow you to identify and process feelings as normal responses to a difficult situation. Counselling may be available through your doctor or local cancer support centre.

Mindfulness involves being aware of the present, including your thoughts, feelings, body, and the world around you. If you keep your attention in the present moment, this prevents you from thinking about the past or worrying about the future. While it is not possible to prevent difficulties in life, mindfulness can help you be less reactive to your thoughts and worries. It helps you to have a more positive outlook and to have more control over how you would like to respond to it.

By being aware of your feelings and allowing them to come and go without trying to fight them, you realise you can become less reactive to your thoughts and worries, and that you are coping, and getting on with life the best you can. In that respect,
Mindfulness helps reduce symptoms of stress and improve mental wellbeing.

Mindfulness can be practised in everyday life and in formal practice sessions. In time, you can train yourself to notice when your thoughts are taking over and realise they do not affect your life or control you. Each time that you find your mind has wandered away, which all our minds do, just bring your attention back to the present.

Complementary therapies, used with your conventional anticancer treatments, can help you relax and be more in control. These therapies may be massaged-based therapies, regular massages, aromatherapy, special massages characterised by light touch and rhythmic sequence movements, relaxation techniques, and holistic therapies, which consider the whole person (physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually). Holistic therapies include reiki, aromatherapy, reflexology, acupuncture and hypnotherapy.

Reiki is a technique for relaxing and reducing stress that originated in Japan. It is based on the principle that a life force energy flows through all of us, and if it is unbalanced, we are more likely to get sick or feel stressed. Reiki is a holistic treatment which is directed at the body, mind and spirit. Reflexology is another form of holistic massage which involves applying intermittent pressure to specific points on the feet and hands which are thought to be connected to certain organs and body systems.

If you are interested in using complementary therapies alongside your treatment pathway, consult your medical team first. Some forms of complementary therapies may not be safe for you as a blood cancer patient so it is important to check.
Loneliness

It is not uncommon for people with blood cancer to feel alone as they go through their blood cancer journey, even if they have a partner, family, friends and healthcare team supporting them.

You may be feeling different from those around you whose lives are continuing, as you are the only one facing the blood cancer, despite their help and support. You may not be able to be completely honest about how you feel with those around you, for fear about how they may react, or you feel you need to protect them.

During your time in hospital for treatment, you may be in an ‘isolation’ room. This isn’t the case for all treatments, but particularly if you undergo a stem cell transplant. It may be a lonely experience for you, although you will be allowed some visitors and there will be the coming and goings of the staff. If your blood counts become very low, visitors may be restricted and you may sometimes feel very vulnerable and alone.

At the peak of your treatment, you will be used to the hospital environment and the healthcare team looking after you. However, once your treatment is less intensive or during the maintenance phase, you may feel lost and abandoned as you will have more time on your own.

If you’re receiving maintenance chemotherapy, you may have to juggle treatment days when you are a patient, with returning to work and reassuming family responsibilities the rest of the time. This can be very challenging, and you may feel that you are trying to cope with the new routine on your own. Allow yourself time to adapt and ask for help if you need it.
There are many reasons why people with blood cancer experience sadness. You may be experiencing grief at the loss of your old life. The hopes and plans that have you had for you and your family have been put on hold for the moment, and you feel a loss of control over your life whilst going through treatment. You may miss people and sport or activities that you used to enjoy. You may also suffer sadness if one of your friends from your support group loses their life.

Nobody else can understand what you’re going through apart from those who have been through it themselves. You may long for the healthy you before, and have a profound sadness due to the changes to your body. Grieving and feeling sad at the impact that your blood cancer has had on you and your family is not self-indulgent and does not make you weak. Acknowledge your feelings rather than burying them. Allow yourself to be sad for the losses you have experienced and try to adjust to your new reality.

It is normal to feel sad with your life which can lower your mood. This usually passes and your normal mood usually resumes. Some people think that low mood may hamper their recovery. They may urge themselves to stay positive and fight their blood cancer, as may others. However, everyone copes in their own way. Being strong and positive can help you to get through your blood cancer journey; however, it is also natural to feel low from time to time, particularly when you are unwell or test results are disappointing.
Mood swings are common after a blood cancer diagnosis. Sadness, worry and anxiety are perfectly natural emotions that almost all patients experience during their blood cancer journey. These feelings are normal reactions and are not an indication that you are struggling. These feelings may lower your mood. This is normal and usually passes. However, if your low mood does not lift after a couple of weeks and you feel depressed to the extent that it is affecting your life and relationships, you may have depression.

Your depression is a reaction to your situation which is both challenging and difficult and is very common in cancer patients. Depression is deeper, with more permanent and serious episodes of sadness than the short periods of feeling low you might have previously experienced. You have feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, low confidence, despair and problems concentrating which do not improve. There are also physical symptoms such as tiredness, difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite and weight, and loss of interest or enjoyment in people and things. As your depression worsens, you may even contemplate causing harm to yourself or others.

Being depressed does not mean you are weak or unable to deal with your blood cancer. It is extremely difficult to free yourself from depression on your own. It is not something you can simply ‘snap out of’ or ‘pull yourself together from’, despite the misconceptions of those who have never experienced it. It is a common medical condition in patients with serious medical conditions and a complication of many types of cancer therapy. Often patients do not recognise their own depression.

In addition, depression can make you feel less inclined to ask for help, so be sure to listen to those close to you. Make sure your family, or your GP and healthcare team if you prefer, know that you are feeling depressed. Depression can be treated with both medication and cognitive behavioural therapy or counselling. You may be recommended self-help books or online questionnaires and
courses.

If you are having suicidal thoughts or feelings, you can call the Samaritan 24-hour helpline on 116 123. In addition, www.mind.org.uk and www.nhs.uk have further information and links to support.

Leukaemia Care offers grants for counselling through our Anne Ashley Counselling Fund for people affected by blood cancer. Visit www.leukaemiacare.org.uk or call 08088 010 444 to find out more.
Despite all the emotions and feelings you have experienced when you had your diagnosis of blood cancer, you can also have a more pragmatic, hopeful and positive view of your experience.

Using mindfulness, you can regain your hope, determination and a positive attitude to help you to face your blood cancer. You should establish and list your reasons for getting through your treatment, and recall them every time you are struggling. It is important to be aware of what thoughts or actions make you feel strong and in control. Put in place some realistic goals to help you get through your time in treatment and recovery. It may be quite some time before your treatment is finally completed; therefore, it may be important for you to take up the offer of support from others.

Human beings are very resilient and, with time and good support, you can adapt to help you process and move forward with your blood cancer diagnosis.
Going through the current pandemic can heighten any feelings you were already experiencing and that is perfectly normal. It is another factor that plays on fears of the unknown and this can bring up feelings of anxiety and worry.

It is important to keep in touch with your haematology team. Guidance and government advice changes and it is sometimes difficult to understand how it applies to you. For personalised, individual advice, you should speak to your haematology team.

**Appointments and treatment**

For some patients, check-ups are being rescheduled if they are just routine and can be held off for a period of time (for example, a six-monthly check-up being delayed an extra month). For others, they are being adapted to be done over the telephone or via video call to make it easier for patients to keep up to date with their medical team. However, some appointments involving important tests or treatment can’t be moved or done in this way. Specialists in each leukaemia type are working hard to prioritise patients and make sure their risk of infection is as low as possible if you do have to attend the hospital at any point.

The NHS is constantly making provisions for all urgent cancer care to continue. All decisions in relation to treatment are being made based on the risk versus the benefits you will gain. Decisions about whether treatment is urgent, or if it should be delayed or changed in any way, is a decision that will be made between you and your clinician.

**Shielding and self-isolation**

People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia, who are at any stage of treatment, are categorised as clinically extremely vulnerable and are advised to shield. Shielding means that you should stay at home and socially isolate from anyone else in your household. If you are unsure, you should shield as per government guidance at least until you have spoken to your own haematology team.
Here are some tips that might help you to cope a little better while shielding:

- Information is useful to help understand your situation. Do not be afraid to reach out to others for information and support including the government website and support resources, patient groups, your local community and support charities.

- It is also important to remember although you might be physically isolated, you do not have to be socially disconnected. Stay connected with your family and friends and take the time to help someone if you can.

- Find things to keep you occupied at home. Exercise your body and mind. Take up a new hobby you’ve been meaning to start. Try to see the potential benefits in what can be a solitary time.

If you choose to be very productive or take the time to relax and take things easy, either option is okay. Don’t be too hard on yourself, and try not to compare yourself to others. It is a difficult and uncertain time for everyone and people react to this kind of situation differently.
A new normal

Once you have got to the end of your treatment, you will be faced with a whole set of new challenges such as recovering from the physical and emotional stresses brought on by your treatment, as well as practicalities of your new life after cancer. You may be relieved that the treatment is over, even if you are still experiencing side effects. You have gone through an enormous upheaval during treatment which has occupied most of your attention, and it is only afterwards that you can start processing its emotional effect.

Your transition to a new life after treatment to what is sometimes called a ‘new normal’ is another big upheaval for you, so be kind and patient with yourself while you regain your self-confidence and take in all you have been through. Friends and family may think you will feel back to your normal self as soon as your treatment has ended; however, you need time to recover both physically and emotionally.

Your goal during treatment may have been to get back to your normal self; however, more realistically, it is finding out what is normal for you now (your ‘new normal’). Having been through what you have with your blood cancer, you may not be able to imagine life ever feeling normal again. Because so much has happened during your illness and treatment, you may feel you are no longer up to speed with aspects of your life. Emotions have been building up while being in treatment, and these emotions may now come to surface and surprise you.

A blood cancer is not something that can be discounted. It is a part of who you are and features in your life story. Its incorporation will take time and is not something that can be expedited, even if you are keen for it to be.

After your treatment, you may miss the support that you got at the hospital and the friendships with the other patients. Some people feel slightly abandoned when they finish treatment. Some of your personal relationships may feel stronger, whereas others may have changed. You may have realised that you or those around you are much stronger than you ever imagined. Continue to accept support from those close to you.
Making decisions and plans with those around you can help you feel more prepared for the future.

Achieving successful treatment of your blood cancer can give you hope for the future and a new meaning for your life. It helps some people realise what is most important in life and can prompt you to make relevant changes. During your recovery, you can steadily include all your experiences of blood cancer into your new vision of yourself and your life. Eventually, you may even consider offering help and support to others who have been affected by blood cancer.

Leukaemia Care offers one-to-one buddy support for people affected by blood cancer. Call 08088 010 444 or email support@leukaemiacare.org.uk to find out more.
Glossary

Adrenaline
A hormone released from the adrenal glands whose main action, together with noradrenaline, is to prepare the body for the ‘fight or flight’ response.

Blood Cancer
A cancer of blood cells from the bone marrow or lymphatic system. There are three main types of blood cancer:

- Leukaemia begins in the bone marrow and is classified according to the type of blood cell it affects (either myeloid or lymphoid) and whether it grows quickly (acute) or slowly (chronic).

- Lymphoma starts in the lymphocyte white blood cells within the lymphatic system.

- Myeloma is a cancer of the plasma cells and starts in the bone marrow. Plasma cells are a type of white blood cell that makes antibodies.

Chemotherapy
Drugs that work in different ways to stop the growth of cancer cells, either by killing the cells or by stopping them from dividing.

Corticosteroids (steroids)
Hormones normally produced by the adrenal glands which are two small glands found above the kidneys. Corticosteroids reduce inflammation (redness and swelling) and the activity of the immune system. They are used for inflammatory conditions such as asthma and eczema and autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis.

Dopamine
A neurotransmitter and hormone that affects several body organs such as the brain, bone marrow, and blood pressure. In the brain, it is involved in motivation, arousal, reinforcement and reward.

Lymphocytes
Lymphocytes are a type of white blood cell that are vitally important to the immune response. There are three types of lymphocytes: B-cells, T-cells and natural killer (NK)-cells. B-cells produce antibodies that seek out invading organisms. T-cells destroy the organisms that have been labelled by the B-cells, as well as internal cells that have
become cancerous. NK-cells attack cancer cells and viruses.

Lymphoid
Relates to lymphocyte white blood cells.

Maintenance Treatment
Treatment given to prevent cancer from coming back after it has disappeared following treatment.

Myeloid
Relates to bone marrow.

Serotonin
A neurotransmitter and hormone that affects several body organs such as the brain and intestines. Low serotonin levels are linked to low mood, depression, anxiety and irritable bowel syndrome.

Watch and Wait
A management approach for slow-growing blood cancers. Also called active monitoring, the Watch and Wait approach is the current standard of care for patients with slow growing blood cancers who do not have any symptoms. Treatment is usually started either once symptoms appear or when test results suggest the blood cancer is progressing.

White Blood Cells
White blood cells are one of the types of cells found in the blood and bone marrow, along with red blood cells and platelets. White blood cells create an immune response against both infectious disease and foreign invaders. Granulocyte white blood cells include the neutrophils (protect against bacterial infections and inflammation), eosinophils (protect against parasites and allergens) and basophils (create the inflammatory reactions during an immune response). Other white blood cells include the lymphocytes (recognise bacteria, viruses and toxins, to which they produce antibodies) and monocytes (clear infection products from the body).
There are a number of helpful sources to support you during your diagnosis, treatment and beyond, including:

- Your haematologist and healthcare team
- Your family and friends
- Your psychologist (ask your haematologist or CNS for a referral)
- Reliable online sources, such as Leukaemia Care
- Charitable organisations

There are a number of organisations, including ourselves, who provide expert advice and information.

**Leukaemia Care**
We are a charity dedicated to supporting anyone affected by the diagnosis of any blood cancer. We provide emotional support through a range of support services including a helpline, patient and carer conferences, support group, informative website, one-to-one buddy service and high-quality patient information. We also have a nurse on our help line for any medical queries relating to your diagnosis. Helpline: **08088 010 444**

www.leukaemiacare.org.uk
support@leukaemiacare.org.uk

**Blood Cancer UK**
Blood Cancer UK is the leading charity into the research of blood cancers. They offer support to patients, their family and friends through patient services.

**0808 2080 888**
www.bloodcancer.org.uk

**Cancer Research UK**
Cancer Research UK is a leading charity dedicated to cancer research.

**0808 800 4040**
www.cancerresearchuk.org

**Macmillan**
Macmillan provides free practical, medical and financial support for people facing cancer.

**0808 808 0000**
www.macmillan.org.uk

**Maggie’s Centres**
Maggie’s offers free practical, emotional and social support to people with cancer and their families and friends.

**0300 123 1801**
www.maggiescentres.org

**Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**
Offers advice on benefits and financial assistance.

**08444 111 444**
www.adviceguide.org.uk
Leukaemia Care is a national charity dedicated to providing information, advice and support to anyone affected by a blood cancer.

Around 34,000 new cases of blood cancer are diagnosed in the UK each year. We are here to support you, whether you’re a patient, carer or family member.