

Chapter 7: Living with kidney cancer

This chapter is part of a series of materials. For more information, and to access further materials, please visit www.KEYTRUDA.co.uk

For patients being treated with KEYTRUDA[®] (pembrolizumab) in combination with axitinib for advanced renal cell carcinoma

Your healthcare team should have provided you with materials to help you identify any side effects you may experience on your treatment. Ensure you read the Patient Safety Information Brochure and carry your Patient Alert Card with you at all times.

It is important to be aware of side effects. Telling your healthcare professional straight away as soon as you notice any symptoms may stop them from becoming more serious.

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO DIAGNOSE OR TREAT SIDE EFFECTS YOURSELF.

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. This includes any possible side effects not listed in the package leaflet. You can also report side effects directly via the Yellow Card Scheme at: <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/> or search for MHRA Yellow Card in the Google Play or Apple App Store. Adverse events should also be reported to Merck Sharp & Dohme Limited (tel: 01992 467272). By reporting side effects you can help provide more information on the safety of this medicine.



Living with kidney cancer



Taking care of your mental and physical health can help you to feel stronger and support your recovery.

Mental health support

Everyone reacts in their own way and you will probably go through a range of emotions after a kidney cancer diagnosis. You may feel upset, shocked, numb, frightened, confused, angry or resentful. It is important to remember that there is no 'right' way to react to a diagnosis and that help is available.



Talking to your healthcare professional:

- Write down any questions as you think of them as this can help you remember them later
- Take someone with you to appointments so they can help you to ask questions and remember the answers
- Ask your healthcare professional to explain things if you need to
- Remember that there is support available so do ask for help if you need it
- Your clinical nurse specialist is your main point of contact and is there to answer any of your questions. They will support you during your treatment and can provide specialist advice about your diagnosis and treatment

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Talking to your friends and family:

- Talking can help you to get the support you need
- Help your friends and family by letting them know if you would like to talk about what's happening and how you feel
- If you find it hard to talk to family or friends, you can talk to someone independent, such as your GP or nurse specialist. Your GP or nurse specialist may also be able to refer you to a psychologist

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Talking to other people:

You might find it easier to talk to someone outside of your own family and friends. Hospices offer counselling, spiritual care and psychological support that you can access locally. Speak to your healthcare team to find out more information about your local hospice.

The following helplines are also available:

Cancer Research UK
www.cancerresearchuk.org

Helpline: 0808 800 4040
Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

Macmillan Cancer Support
www.macmillan.org.uk

Macmillan Support Line:
0808 808 00 00

**Kidney Cancer UK
& Kidney Cancer Scotland**
www.kcuk.org.uk

Patients' support Careline:
0800 002 9002
Mon-Fri 9am-4pm

**Kidney Cancer
Support Network**
www.kcsn.org.uk

Helpline: 01209 890326
Email: team@kcsn.org.uk
Mon-Fri 10am-4pm



Cancer Research UK has online self-help strategies across a range of mental health issues related to kidney cancer that you can explore in your own time.

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Physical wellbeing

- It's important to look after both your physical and mental health. Hospices offer many services to help you feel better during and after your treatment. These services include:
- **Pain and symptom management.** Community nurses can offer care and advice in the comfort of your own home. Symptoms can also be managed at the hospice, where you can stay until you feel well enough to go home
- **Rehabilitation**, such as occupational therapy and physiotherapy aim to improve your quality of life
- **Complementary therapies** can relieve symptoms and side effects, as well as improving your physical and mental health. Massage, aromatherapy and acupuncture are examples of complementary therapies

Hospices are different to hospitals and, in general, are much quieter. Many hospices have day centres, where you can meet and talk to other people who may be going through similar experiences to you. You can also access many hospice services at home.

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Following a healthy and balanced meal plan and being active

Your diet and daily activity can contribute to how you feel both physically and emotionally.

Up to **40% of people have unintended weight loss** when diagnosed with cancer or find getting the right nutrition a challenge at the beginning of their treatment. During your treatment, you may not feel like eating certain foods or you may only be able to eat small amounts of food. This can lead to weight loss. Cancer treatments or side effects can also cause you to gain weight. If you have concerns about losing or gaining weight, talk to your healthcare team who may be able to refer you to a dietitian.



A healthy and balanced meal plan can help you to **maintain strength, feel healthy, and fight off infections.**

Being active can make you feel better because of the release of hormones that make you feel good (endorphins) and it can help with managing your weight. If you feel well, **30 minutes of moderate activity, 5 times a week**, is recommended.

Before starting exercise, discuss this with your healthcare professional and develop an exercise plan that is suitable for you.



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Tips to help with a healthy and balanced meal plan during your treatment:

- **Lower the amount of salt** in your diet
- Foods rich in **vitamin A and C** can help with potential constipation problems
 - This includes foods such as eggs, broccoli, and citrus fruits
- **High fibre foods** can also help with potential constipation problems
 - These include foods such as oats, whole wheat pasta and brown rice
- Try to eat plenty of **fresh fruit and vegetables**
 - Discuss your nutritional plans and requirements with your healthcare professional or a dietitian
- **Be mindful about high protein foods and drinks** such as red-meat, cheese, butter and whole milk
 - These foods should be eaten in moderation, however, if you are losing weight, it is important to eat foods high in energy and protein. This includes plenty of full fat foods and drinks which will help you maintain your weight during treatment
- While alcohol is allowed, lowering the amount you drink is recommended while receiving treatment



A well balanced diet will help you to maintain strength and prevent infection.



Stopping smoking can help to improve your overall health and increase the chances of your treatment working.

Your hospital may be able to offer support and medicines to help you stop smoking. For more information, download **Chapter 9: Getting ready for your treatment with KEYTRUDA and axitinib**

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Dealing with money and finances

A diagnosis of kidney cancer might mean that you earn less money because you have to reduce the numbers of hours you work or stop work completely.

You may also have new expenses to consider. These could be expenses in your home, such as having the heating on more, or to do with working, as you may need to retrain. You may also need to travel to your appointments, and pay for car parking fees at the hospital.



You may be eligible for benefits and grants, which are available to help you. There are several organisations that offer financial advice and support. Please ask your nurse specialist for more information.

Organisations that provide advice on money issues (such as mortgage, pension, credit cards, and insurance):

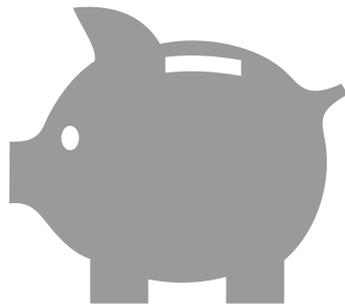
- Kidney Cancer UK
- Macmillan Cancer UK
- Turn2us

Charities and organisations that offer grants:

- Kidney Cancer UK
- Macmillan Cancer UK
- Turn2us

Organisations that offer benefits advice:

- Citizens advice
- The Money Charity
- National Debtline



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References

1. Cancer.Net. Available at <https://www.cancer.net/> (Accessed September 2020)
2. Kidney Cancer UK. Available at <https://www.kcuk.org.uk/> (Accessed September 2020)
3. Cancer Research UK. Available at <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/> (Accessed September 2020)

