

# GLOSSARY

**Acupressure:** Treatment of symptoms by applying pressure with the fingers to specific pressure points on the body.

**Acupuncture:** A procedure used in which specific body areas are pierced with fine needles for therapeutic purposes or to relieve pain or produce regional anesthesia.

**Addiction:** Emotional need for pain medication because of the feeling that is received from the medicine.

**Advanced cancer:** Cancer is said to be “advanced” when it is unlikely to be eradicated by treatment.

**Advanced care directive:** Legal documents in which you give written instructions about your health care if, in the future, you cannot speak for yourself.

**Alternative therapies:** Are used instead of conventional treatment. These therapies may be harmful if people with cancer delay or stop using conventional treatment in favour of them.

**Anaesthetic:** A drug that stops a person from feeling pain during a medical procedure.

**Analgesic:** A drug used to relieve pain.

**Anaemia:** Lower-than-normal number of red cells in the blood.

**Antibiotic:** Medication used to fight germs or bacteria that cause infection.

**Complementary therapies:** Supportive treatments that are used in conjunction with conventional treatment. They improve general health, well-being, quality of life and help people cope with side effects of cancer. Complementary therapies may include meditation, counselling, hypnotherapy, massage, acupuncture and yoga. Not all therapies have been scientifically validated, but there is growing evidence in favour of them.

**Computerised Axial Tomography (CT/CAT):** Uses x-rays to see the body in a three-dimensional way. CT scanning is used to diagnose end stage cancer. Sometimes it is necessary to use a contrast medium for the images to show up on the computer.

**Counsellors:** Mental health workers who can help you with relationship or family issues, show you ways of dealing with anxiety and depression and provide grief counselling to your family and caregivers.

**Constipation:** Difficulty passing stools, incomplete or infrequent passing of hard stools.

**Dehydration:** Excessive loss of body water.

**Diagnosis:** The identification and naming of a person's disease.

**Dietician:** Health professional who specialises in human nutrition.

**Distraction:** Learning to direct pain at something other than pain.

**Diuretic:** Any drug that increases the excretion of water from the body and consequently elevates the rate of urination.

**Dose:** Amount of medication to be taken.

**Dose titration:** Adjustment of medication dose either up or down.

**Double blind:** Trial in which neither the patient nor their doctor knows what treatment the patient is receiving, to reduce bias.

**Dyspnea:** Difficult or laboured breathing.

**Ethics committee:** Hospital committee that reviews the plan for a clinical trial to ensure it is safe and ethical.

**Grade:** Score that describes how quickly the tumour is likely to grow.

**Holistic care:** Care that incorporates different types of therapies and services to ensure that your physical, emotional, spiritual and practical needs are met.

**Hormone:** Substance that affects how your body works. Some hormones control growth, others control reproduction. They are distributed around the body through the bloodstream.

**Hormone replacement therapy:** Use of hormones to treat the symptoms of menopause.

**Hormone therapy:** Treatment to block the body's natural hormones that help cancer grow.

**Hospice:** A place which provides comprehensive care for people with a life-threatening illness. This includes inpatient medical care, respite care and care of dying person if he or she is not able/or wish to to die at home.

**Immunotherapy:** A treatment that attempts to use the body's own defences to fight cancer by trying to strengthen the immune system so it will destroy the cancer cells.

**Incontinence:** Inability to hold or control the loss of urine or faeces.

**Informed consent form:** Form a person signs to show that they understand the information they have been given about a trial and they agree to take part.

**Infusion:** Refers to a number of sleep complaints including difficulties falling asleep, difficulties staying asleep, poor sleep quality and daytime tiredness.

**Insomnia:** A long period of time when you are unable to fall sleep.

**Interferon:** Substance that occurs naturally within your body and which enhances your immune system's fight against viruses. Interferon is manufactured for use as a medication and has shown anti-tumour activity against some uncommon cancers.

**Intolerance:** Unable to digest properly.

**Intravenous:** Into a vein. An intravenous drip gives drugs directly into a vein.

**Investigator:** Researcher in a treatment trial.

**Laxative:** Something to relieve constipation.

**Lymph:** Clear fluid that circulates around the body through the lymphatic system, carrying cells that fight infection.

**Lymph nodes:** Also called lymph glands. Small bean-shaped structures scattered along the lymphatic vessels, particularly in the neck, armpit and groin. They filter the lymph to remove bacteria and other harmful agents to prevent them from entering the bloodstream. Lymph nodes also produce lymphocytes, a type of white blood cell.

**Lymph vessels:** Network of thin tubes that transport lymph into tissues all over the body.

**Lymphatic system:** Network of vessels that carry a clear fluid called lymph from the body's tissues to the bloodstream. The lymphatic system is part of the body's immune system and helps the body fight infection.

**Lymphoedema:** Swelling caused by a build-up of lymph fluid. This happens when lymph nodes do not drain properly, usually after lymph glands are removed.

**Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI):** A diagnostic test that uses a combination of magnetism and radio waves to create three-dimensional sectional images of part of a person's body. MRIs are particularly good for soft tissue, brain and spinal cord, joints and abdomen and may be used for detecting some cancers or for following their progress.

**Malignant:** Cancerous. Malignant cells can spread (metastasise) and can eventually cause death if they cannot be treated.

**Mammogram:** An x-ray of the breast which can pick up cancers when they are still too small to be felt.

**Mastectomy:** Surgical removal of the whole breast.

**Metastasis:** Also known as a secondary cancer. A cancer that has spread from another part of the body.

**Morphine:** Strong and effective painkiller, which is commonly used to treat people with cancer who have pain.

**Multidisciplinary team:** A health care team consisting of a group of experts, which may include doctors, nurses, a general practitioner, a surgeon, a medical oncologist, a radiation oncologist, a palliative care specialist, a nurse consultant, nurses, a dietician, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, a social worker, a psychologist, a counsellor and/or a pastoral care worker who specialise in the

treatment of specific types of cancer. Most doctors who treat the common types of cancer work with experts in a multidisciplinary team.

**Nerve block:** Pain medication that is injected directly into or around a nerve or into the spine to block pain.

**Nutrition:** Process of eating and digesting the necessary food the body needs.

**Nutrition supplement:** Food or drink that provides extra energy, protein and/or vitamins.

**Nutritious/nourishing:** Food that is a good source of energy (calories) and/or protein as well as vitamins and minerals.

**Occupational therapist:** Rehabilitation professional who assists individuals to compensate for functional limitations as a result of an injury, illness or disability by learning skills and techniques needed to perform activities of daily living and optimise independence.

**Oncologist:** doctor who specialises in the study and treatment of cancer.

**Oncology:** Study of tumours or cancer.

**Opioids:** Strongest pain relievers available. Include morphine, fentanyl, codeine, oxycodone, hydromorphone and methadone.

**Over-the-counter medicines:** Medicines you can buy without a doctor's prescription.

**Palliative care:** Holistic care of people who have a life-limiting illness, their families and carer. It aims to improve quality of life by addressing physical, emotional, spiritual, social and physical needs. It is NOT just for people who are about to die although end-of-life care is a part of palliative care.

**Palliative care nurse:** Nurse with special training in easing of cancer-related symptoms. Palliative care nurses work with a team in the hospital and can also visit the patient at home.

**Palliative treatment:** Medical treatment for people with advanced cancer to help them manage pain and other physical and emotional symptoms of cancer. Treatment may include radiotherapy, chemotherapy or other medication.

**PET scan:** Positron Emission Tomography. Technique used to build up clear and detailed cross-sectional pictures of the body involving the injection of small amounts of radioactive material, which show up areas of fast cell growth.

**Physiotherapist:** Health care professional who specialises in physical therapy and who can help you manage pain, incontinence, lymphoedema and other symptoms. A physiotherapist can also help you recover from operations and work on your physical mobility.

**Placebo:** A dummy pill or injection, which looks like the new treatment being tested but contains no active ingredient.

**Port-a-cath:** Small medical appliance that is installed beneath the skin. A catheter connects the port to a vein. Through the port-a-cath drugs can be injected and blood samples can be drawn many times, usually with less discomfort for the patient than a more typical “needle stick”.

**Primary cancer:** Original cancer. Cells from the primary cancer may break away and be carried to other parts of the body, where secondary cancer forms.

**Prognosis:** Likely outcome of a person’s disease.

**Prostate specific antigen (PSA):** Protein produced by prostate cells. It can be used to test for prostate cancer or to monitor its recurrence.

**Psychologists:** Mental health workers who can help you with any emotional issues including relationship or family issues, ways of dealing with anxiety and depression, for you, your family and caregivers.

**Quality of life:** Measure of your comfort and satisfaction, based on how well your individual physical, emotional, spiritual, sexual, social and financial needs are being met within limitation of your illness. How cancer and its treatment affects a person’s day-to-day functioning.

**Radiation enteritis:** Swelling (inflammation) of the lining of the small intestine due to radiation therapy.

**Radiation oncologist:** doctor who specialises in treating cancer with radiotherapy.

**Radiation therapist:** Health professional who administers radiotherapy.

**Radiotherapy:** Use of radiation, usually x-rays or gamma rays, to kill cancer cells or injure them so they cannot grow or multiply.

**Randomised controlled trial:** Trial in which participants are randomly allocated to receive the new treatment or the standard treatment (the control).

**Recurrent cancer:** Cancer that grows from cells of a primary cancer that have evaded treatment.

**Relapse:** The return of a disease after a period of improvement.

**Respite care:** Alternative care arrangements which allow the carer and person with cancer a short break from their usual care arrangements.

**Screening:** Organised program to identify disease, such as cancer, before symptoms appear.

**Secondary cancer:** Also called a metastasis. A tumour that has spread from the original site to another part of the body.

**Shortness of breath:** Difficulty in drawing sufficient breath or laboured breathing.

**Specialist palliative care team:** Holistic team of health professionals who offer a range of services to improve your quality of life and help with any problems you have. A community nurse or palliative care nurse usually coordinates the team.

**Stomatitis:** Inflammation of the mouth.

**Suppository:** Drug delivery system that is inserted either into the rectum (rectal suppository), vagina (vaginal suppository) or urethra (urethral suppository) where it dissolves.

**Tumour:** New or abnormal growth of tissue on or in the body.

**Ultrasound:** Use of soundwaves to build up a picture of the internal parts of the body.

**Vaccine:** Biological preparation that establishes or improves immunity to a particular disease.

**Voluntary euthanasia:** Choosing a painless, medically assisted death in accordance with person’s expressed wishes and directions when that person is suffering severe pain or distress, with no reasonable prospect of recovery.

**Will:** Legally binding document that details how you want your assets and belongings to be distributed after you die.

**X-ray:** X-rays or ultrasound – may reveal tumours in certain parts of the body.