



Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

As Lead cancer nurse at DCH, I would like to pass on my good wishes to you all at this difficult and uncertain time with the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the UK, including Dorset.

I understand that it is a very worrying time for many of you and for those on cancer treatments, this is an especially difficult time.

There is such a lot of information in the newspapers and on the news and some of it is particularly concerning to read and hear.

I would like to reassure you that the clinical teams at Dorset County Hospital are working hard to ensure that we continue to treat patients affected by cancer.

Every patient is treated as an individual and whilst some treatment plans may change, it is important to stress that any changes that are made are following a multi-disciplinary team discussion to ensure we achieve optimal patient safety and outcomes in this challenging situation.

Many of the clinical services that patients with cancer use at DCH are still in operation. All of our clinical nurse specialists, ward nurses, doctors and support staff are still working hard to deliver investigations, treatment and care.

Most outpatient consultations are now being delivered by telephone unless it is deemed critical that a face to face meeting is required.

Xrays and Scans (CT/MRI/Ultrasound) are still being delivered although appointment dates and times may change. The hospital team will advise you of any changes to your planned scans or x-rays.

We are still holding our regular multidisciplinary team meetings to discuss patients and their treatment plans.

Many GP surgeries are still delivering phlebotomy services for urgent blood tests so we would encourage you to talk to your surgery if you need a blood test as part of your cancer treatment. We also have some capacity for blood tests at the hospital but you must book an appointment for this via your cancer nurse specialists.

Chemotherapy and radiotherapy continue to be delivered at DCH and Poole Hospitals although some treatment plans have changed to reduce the number of hospital visits that are required.

Cancer surgery continues on a case by case basis.

The acute oncology/chemotherapy 24 hour emergency telephone service are still in operation and we would encourage you to contact us by telephone in the event of any worrying side effects or problems. This includes symptoms of Covid-19 such as a high temperature or dry cough. This is especially important if you are receiving chemotherapy or immunotherapy as your symptoms may be related to your cancer treatment and not COVID-19.



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Despite being in the middle of a national emergency, and the governments message being for you to stay at home, you are still entitled to appropriate healthcare and we would actively encourage you to contact us with any concerns you may have. It is vital that you seek medical help if you have developed concerning signs or symptoms or problems that do not go away. If you delay seeking help, your problems may get worse and problems are often easier to deal with if you seek help sooner.

Most importantly, if you are feeling worried about anything to do with your cancer or its treatment, please don't sit and worry alone. Pick up the telephone and call someone for help and advice. This may be your GP, practice nurse, palliative care nurse, hospital cancer nurse specialist, or support worker. Whilst your cancer support group will not be delivering their usual services, I am sure they will still be playing a valuable role in supporting you with on-line resources and newsletters.

We are here to help and support you during this challenging time and continue in our endeavours to deliver high quality cancer care at Dorset County Hospital.

We all look forward to more settled times over the next few weeks and months.

Abigail Orchard

Lead cancer Nurse - Dorset County Hospital

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