

A Self-Monitoring Guide for Patients Receiving Immune Checkpoint Inhibitors

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Understanding Immunotherapy Side Effects

What is immunotherapy?

Immunotherapy is a type of cancer medicine:

- These medicines are designed to work with your immune system to treat certain types of cancer.
- Immunotherapy works differently than traditional chemotherapy and can cause different kinds of side effects.
- It is important to be aware of possible side effects and contact your health care professional right away if you experience any problems.

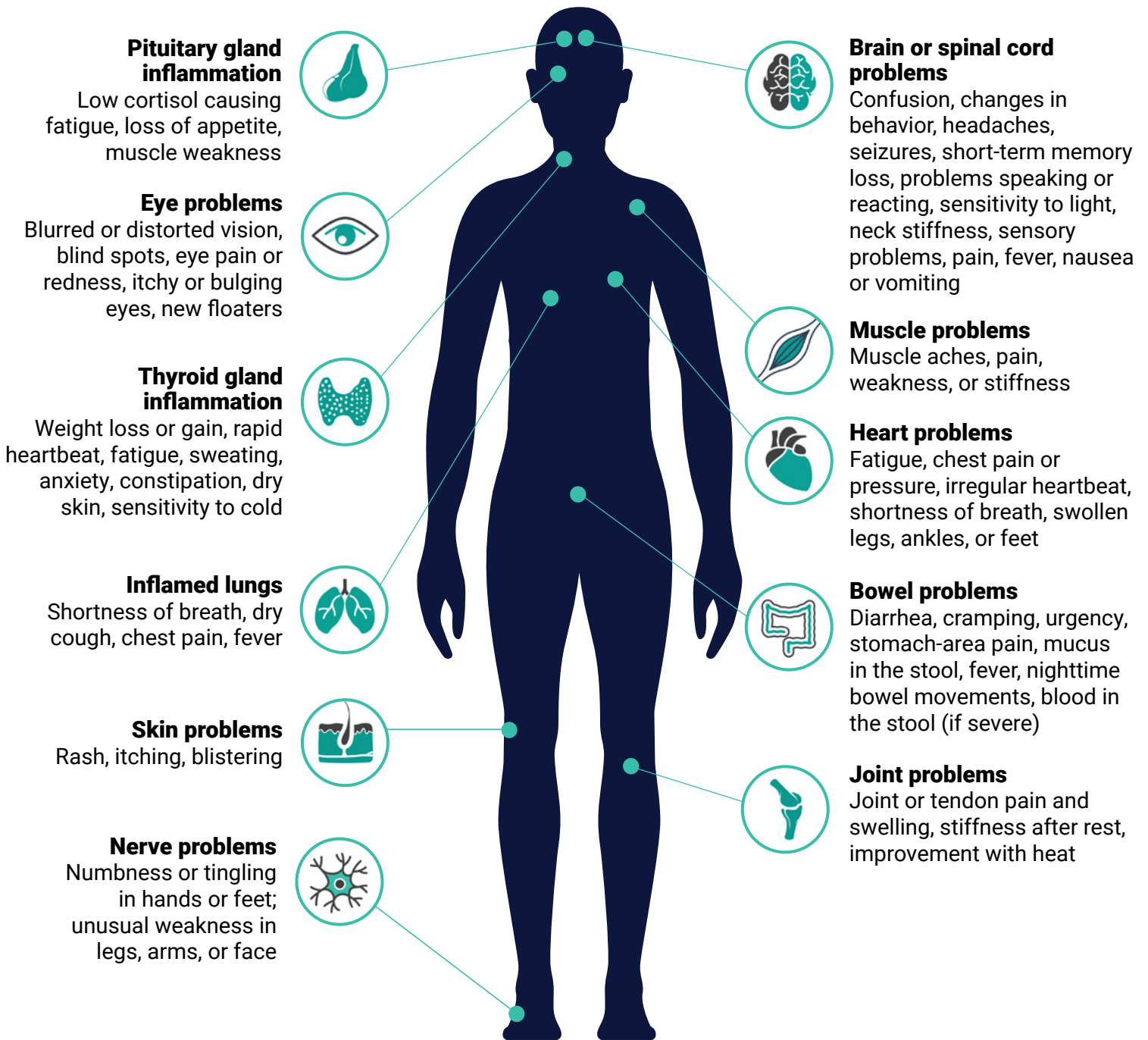
Immune checkpoint inhibitors (a type of immunotherapy) offer a promising new way to treat cancer for some patients. But these medicines can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues in your body, affecting the way they work. Most of these side effects are mild but serious side effects can occur.



Did you know?

- No matter where your cancer began, side effects from immunotherapy can affect your whole body.
- Side effects may appear shortly after beginning treatment, within the first couple of months, or even after you finish treatment.
- Because many of these side effects can occur from other causes that would be treated differently, make sure your doctor knows you are or were on immunotherapy.
- You may be more likely to experience side effects if you are taking more than one kind of immunotherapy or immunotherapy combined with other types of cancer medicines.
- Many of these immune side effects are treatable. Your doctor may prescribe corticosteroids or other medications to help manage any problems.
- Rare but serious side effects can lead to death, especially if left untreated.

Please contact your cancer care team if you experience any of the following side effects:



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What are the possible side effects and how can you watch for these?

- The chart below lists some of the possible side effects that you may have during or for up to one year after you finish treatment.
- You may use the following chart to help guide you in monitoring these possible side effects.
 - › Ask yourself these questions every day.
 - › Or, you can have a family member or caregiver ask you the questions.
- Your health care team will give you information about who to contact any time you have questions about side effects.
- **If the answer to any of these questions is “YES”, please refer to your Orange Alert Card about symptoms that would require you to go to the Emergency Department. You can also let your cancer care team know about any symptoms at your next visit.**

Side Effect	Yes/No
Skin	
Are you having any redness, pain, or swelling at the injection site?	
Are you having any new itchiness or skin peeling?	
Do you have any new painful blisters on your body or inside your mouth?	
Digestive System, also called the GI System	
Are you having any new nausea or vomiting?	
Do you have any new abdominal (tummy area) pain or tenderness?	
Are you having any new diarrhea or an increase in bowel movements?	
Have your bowel movements changed colour? (for example - bloody, with mucus, dark or tarry)	
Lungs	
Are you having new or worsening shortness of breath or chest pain?	
Do you have a new or worsening cough?	

Side Effect	Yes/No
Liver	
Are the white parts of your eyes or your skin turning a yellow colour?	
Do you have new right side abdominal pain?	
Are you noticing that you bruise or bleed more easily?	
Kidneys	
Do you notice that you need to pee/urinate less?	
Is your urine changing colour or does it look darker?	
Hormone Changes	
Are you feeling hungrier or thirstier than usual?	
Has there been an unexplained / significant weight change since your last visit?	
Are you feeling a lot more tired than usual?	
Are you feeling warmer or colder than usual?	
Have you noticed any new headaches, dizziness, or fainting?	
Are you more constipated than usual?	
Have you or your family noticed any significant changes in your mood?	
Fever	
Are you having any chills or shaking?	

Patient and family feedback is very important to us.

We would like to invite you to send any comments or suggestions on how to improve this booklet to education.cancercare@nshealth.ca or feel free to call us at 1-866-599-2267.

Looking for more health information?

Find this brochure and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/cancer>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.