

# Supporting you through cancer treatment and beyond



Your guide to navigating  
cancer with Ramsay  
Cancer Care

[ramsayhealth.com.au](https://ramsayhealth.com.au)



**Ramsay**  
Health Care

A photograph of two women in conversation. The woman on the right has short, wavy grey hair and is smiling warmly. She is wearing a light-colored, textured cardigan over a white top and is holding a clipboard with a pen. The woman on the left has long, straight grey hair and is wearing a purple top. The background is softly blurred, showing another person in a maroon and white shirt. A white semi-transparent box is overlaid on the bottom half of the image, containing the table of contents.

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# Welcome to Ramsay Cancer Care

A cancer diagnosis can be a daunting time for you and your loved ones. But it's important to remember that you are not alone. The expert team at Ramsay CancerCare is here to support you, bringing stability and comfort to a time of uncertainty.

We've written this booklet to help you navigate your cancer treatment and follow-up care. Inside you will find helpful information about:

- Cancer and cancer care
- Your treatment and treatment team
- Your physical and emotional wellbeing during and after treatment
- Practical considerations and advice.

At the end of this booklet, you will also find a treatment planner to help you keep track of appointments, important dates and information, and medications.



You are more  
than your  
diagnosis

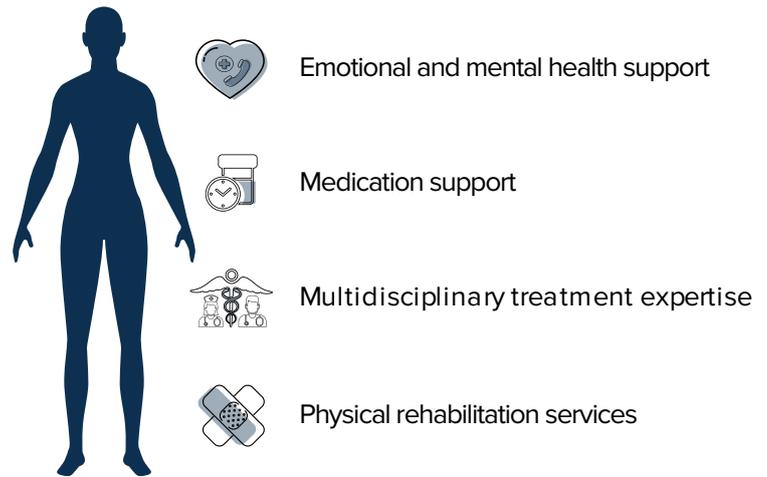


At Ramsay CancerCare, we understand that you are more than your cancer diagnosis. That's why we strive to provide you with more than just cancer treatment. We care for your whole physical and emotional health through our network of treatment and wellness services.

From your initial cancer diagnosis and treatment, through to physical rehabilitation and psychological support, the expert team at Ramsay CancerCare is here to guide you along every step of the cancer pathway.

We believe that taking a holistic view of cancer care and investing in your wellbeing will optimise your treatment outcomes and improve your quality of life.

## Holistic cancer care from Ramsay



# Understanding cancer

## What is cancer?

The body is made up of many types of cells. Normally, cells grow and divide to produce more cells when your body needs them. This process helps keep the body healthy.

Cancer occurs when abnormal cells grow and divide in an uncontrolled way. These cells form a mass of tissue known as a tumour.

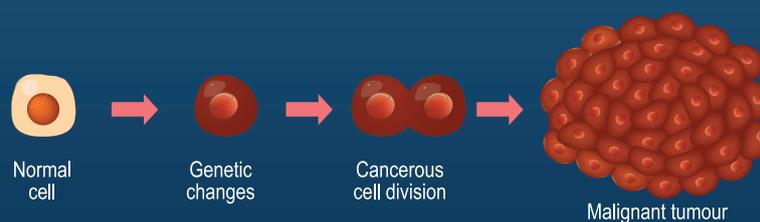
**Benign tumours** are not cancerous. Cells from a benign tumour do not spread to other parts of the body. They can often be removed, and in most cases do not come back. Benign tumours are typically not life threatening.

**Malignant tumours** are cancerous. Cells from malignant tumours are abnormal and can spread to other areas of the body. When malignant cells grow and spread, they can cause damage. Malignant tumours can be life threatening if left untreated.

## NORMAL CELL DEVELOPMENT



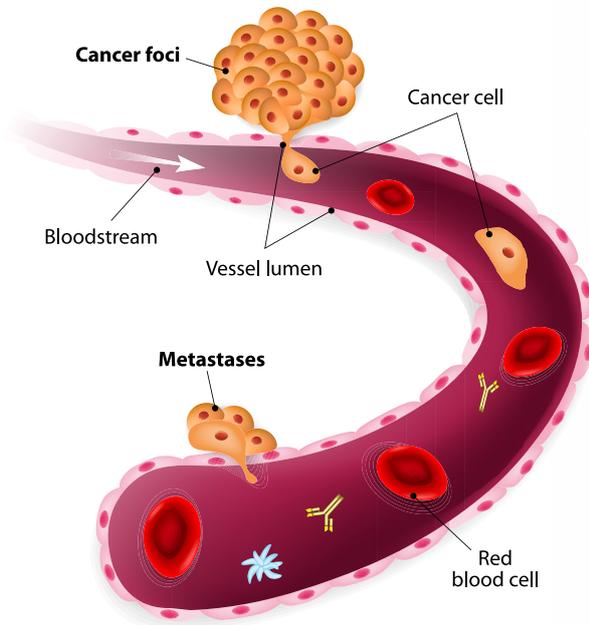
## ABNORMAL CELL GROWTH



Tumours can be benign or malignant.

## How does cancer spread?

As a malignant tumour gets bigger, cancer cells can break away and travel through the blood or lymphatic system to other areas of the body. When cancer cells spread, this is known as metastases.



## Receiving treatment for cancer

Everybody's experience with cancer is unique. At Ramsay Cancer Care, we are committed to providing person-centred care that places you at the heart of all treatment decisions.

Your health history, personal preferences and values will influence the type of treatment and supportive care you receive. Your treatment team and the Cancer Care navigator will work with you and your loved ones to develop a treatment plan that meets your specific needs.

Your treatment plan will include:

- the specific treatment/s that you will undergo
- the physical psychological support that you may require to help you build strength during and after treatment
- any clinical trials that you may be a part of
- any other practical supports to optimise your outcomes and improve your quality of life.



### Dedicated cancer specialist

You receive a cancer diagnosis and take your first step on the cancer pathway under the care of a Ramsay Cancer Specialist.



### Multidisciplinary integrated care

You receive multidisciplinary, integrated treatment for your physical and emotional wellbeing.



### Physical rehabilitation

Your physical rehabilitation is guided by our expert allied health team.



### Emotional wellbeing

Your emotional and mental wellbeing is cared for by a CancerCare Navigator. You may be provided with educational resources or information to support you and you may be referred to other services if needed, including your GP or a psychologist.



### Medication support

You will receive help with medication and side effects from our onsite pharmacy team.



### Coordinated Care

Your CancerCare Navigator and your specialist nursing team ensures you have access to the right information, support and referrals at the right time, helping you make decisions and supporting you along the cancer pathway. They will also work alongside your clinical team who will keep your GP up to date.

## Building your treatment team

Your cancer care will be overseen by a multidisciplinary team of health professionals. The specific members of your treatment team will depend on the type of cancer you have. But here are some core members of the team who will care for you during and after your treatment.

### Doctors

You will be admitted to hospital under the care of a Visiting Medical Officer (VMO). A VMO is the specialist doctor who is leading your treatment. Your VMO may be a haematologist, medical oncologist, radiation oncologist or a surgeon, depending on the type of treatment you are in hospital to receive.

Your VMO may work with other physicians who specialise in certain diseases or areas of the body. These specialists can include endocrinologists, respiratory physicians, renal physicians, and infectious diseases specialists.

VMOs may also have junior staff working with them in their teams. The junior staff are called residents and registrars.

### Nurses

A team of nurses, led by a Nurse Unit Manager (NUM), will ensure that all your needs are met to give you the best possible outcomes from treatment. Your nurses will work with other members of your multidisciplinary team to fulfil your treatment plan, with a special focus on your recovery and quality of life.

Your nursing team will be made up of a variety of specialist nursing roles – each playing an important role in your care.

On the ward or in the CancerCare day infusion centre you may meet:

- Nurse Unit Managers
- Registered Nurses
- Clinical Nurse Specialists
- Clinical Nurses
- Clinical Nurse Educators
- Enrolled Nurses.

Depending on the type of cancer you have, you may also meet some whole hospital specialist nurses who work across all units to ensure your care is coordinated.

These roles may include:

- CancerCare navigators
- Registered Nurses
- Prostate Nurses
- Breast Care Nurses
- Palliative care Nurses
- Cancer Wellness Nurses.

### Cancer Care Navigators

Understanding and navigating the complex world of cancer treatment can be overwhelming. A Cancer Care Navigator is a specialist nurse who has extensive experience in caring for people with cancer.

When you start treatment for cancer at Ramsay Cancer Care, your Cancer Care Navigator will work alongside your multidisciplinary treatment team to coordinate all aspects of your care, so that you and your loved ones can focus on what matters most.





## Tailoring your treatment

There are many different types of treatment for cancer, including surgery, chemotherapy, immunotherapy, and radiotherapy. You may receive one or a combination of these treatments. Your specific treatment plan will depend on the type of cancer that you have and your personal preferences.

### Confirming your diagnosis

When you are first referred to a cancer specialist with a suspected cancer, your specialist will want to confirm your diagnosis and find out as much about your cancer as possible.

You may undergo a series of tests, including:

- blood tests
- tissue biopsies, where a small amount of your suspect tissue is sent away for testing
- diagnostic imaging, like an ultrasound, CT scan or MRI.

Pathologists will examine your blood and/or tissue to identify signs of cancer and any unique features of your cancer cells that could help find a more effective treatment. Diagnostic imaging specialists will examine your scans to work out the size of your cancer and if it has spread.

All of this information is vital in helping your cancer specialist and treatment team decide on the most effective treatment options for you.

## Surgery

Surgery is a procedure used to remove a cancer tumour from your body or repair a part of your body affected by cancer. It is sometimes called an operation and is performed by a surgeon.

If your cancer is found early, surgery may be the only treatment that you need. However, not all cancers can be surgically removed.

Surgery can be used in combination with other treatments, such as chemotherapy, immunotherapy or radiotherapy.

## Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is a type of medication used to treat cancer. There are many different types of chemotherapy drugs. The type and dose of chemotherapy you receive will depend on your cancer.

Chemotherapy works by killing fast growing cells in your body. This includes cancer cells, but also includes other fast-growing cells such as blood cells, the lining of the mouth, gut and bowel and your skin. Normal cells recover from chemotherapy, but cancer cells do not.

Chemotherapy can be given as:

- a tablet
- an injection into the vein (intravenous)
- an injection under the skin (subcutaneous).

Typically, you will be given chemotherapy in cycles, with rest days in between treatment days. This allows your normal cells to recover and reduces the burden of side effects. A chemotherapy cycle can be as short as one half-hour infusion or may take several days to complete.

## Immunotherapy and targeted therapy

Like chemotherapy, immunotherapy and targeted therapy are types of drugs used to treat cancer.

Immunotherapy activates your body's own immune system to seek out and destroy cancer cells. Targeted therapy

blocks the growth of cancer by interfering with specific gene mutations that allow cancers to grow.

Both immunotherapy and targeted therapy travel through your blood stream to treat cancer cells throughout your body. This focused action means that, unlike chemotherapy, they have a limited impact on your other, healthy cells.

Immunotherapy and targeted therapy can be used in combination with other treatments, including surgery and radiotherapy.

## Radiotherapy

Radiotherapy uses a controlled dose of radiation to destroy cancer cells. Radiotherapy is given directly to the affected area using focused x-ray beams or other radioactive sources.

Cancer cells begin to die days or weeks after treatment starts and continue to die for weeks or months after it finishes.

Radiotherapy may be used:

- as your main treatment for cancer, to shrink or destroy your cancer
- to increase the effectiveness of other treatments, such as shrinking your tumour before surgery to make it easier to remove
- to manage your symptoms and relieve pain.

## Theranostics

Theranostics is a combination of the words 'therapeutics' and 'diagnostics'. It is a relatively new approach to cancer treatment that uses diagnostic imaging to identify unique features on your cancer cells. This information is then used to design a customised treatment that can then be delivered to the site of your cancer using nanotechnology.

Theranostics is a type of precision medicine. Using nanotechnology to deliver treatment at the site of your cancer can help to reduce the burden of side effects you may experience from traditional therapies.

## Clinical trials

Clinical trials are a crucial type of research to find new and better ways of detecting, diagnosing, and treating cancer. Clinical trials aim to improve your treatment options and your quality of life.

If you have been diagnosed with cancer, you may be eligible to participate in a clinical trial through Ramsay Cancer Care.

Each clinical trial is designed with a specific set of criteria for who is eligible to join a trial. These criteria may include factors such as the type of cancer you have, your age and your overall wellbeing.

You can speak with your treatment team or Cancer Care Navigator about participating in a clinical trial. You may like to use the following questions as a guide for your discussion:

1

Are you aware of any clinical trials that may be suitable for me?

2

What is the purpose of the clinical trial? What are the researchers hoping to learn?

3

Why do the researchers believe that the treatment being studied may be better than the available treatment?

4

What will the clinical trial involve? Will I have to have extra tests or appointments?

5

Am I at risk of receiving a placebo treatment if I participate in a clinical trial?

6

How could participating in a clinical trial benefit me?

# Looking after your wellbeing

Holistic cancer care should encompass all aspects of your physical and emotional wellbeing – not just your primary cancer treatment.

## Allied health support

A healthy diet, being strong, fit and having good mental health are all crucial for getting the most out of your treatment, living well both during and after cancer. Allied health professionals, such as dietitians, physiotherapists, occupational therapist, exercise physiologists and psychologists, play an important role in helping you achieve these things.

Ramsay Health Plus is a dedicated team of allied health professionals who are available to address your specific needs during and after your cancer treatment.

Your CancerCare Navigator can put you in touch with a Ramsay Health Plus team or allied health service closest to you, where you can access all your allied health support under the one roof.

## Keeping active

Keeping physically active with regular exercise during and after cancer treatment can not only boost your physical wellbeing but help to improve your mental health and quality of life, as well. Exercise may also help to reduce the burden of side effects from your treatment.

Experts recommend being active on most days of the week – everyday if you can manage it! But you should be mindful of how your body is feeling and the recommendations of your treating specialist and healthcare team.

A Ramsay Health Plus exercise physiologist or physiotherapist can help you by establishing an exercise program that suits your body and your needs.

## Eating well

Sometimes cancer treatment can change your appetite and your relationship with food. But it's important to maintain a nutritionally balanced diet to help give you energy during and after your treatment.

Eat fresh vegetables, fruits and nuts. Choose lean meats and fish. And aim to drink 6 to 8 cups of water each day to keep hydrated.

A Ramsay Health Plus dietitian can help you to establish an eating plan and overcome any food-based challenges you may be experiencing.

## Seeking psychological support

Everyone deals with a cancer diagnosis differently. It's normal to feel a wide range of emotions – from anger and fear, to stress and depression. If the emotions you are experiencing are having a negative impact on your daily life, it can help to speak with your healthcare team, CancerCare navigator or GP. They may refer you to a psychologist.

Just like your doctors and nurses take care of your physical needs, a psychologist can help to take care of your emotional and mental health needs during and after your cancer treatment.





## Cancer Care ACTIVATE – a little extra help

Sometimes, cancer treatment can affect your ability to perform everyday activities. Your physical abilities may be limited and your emotional wellbeing and quality of life may suffer.

The multidisciplinary Cancer Care ACTIVATE program for people with more complex care rehabilitation needs, is specially designed for people who have experienced a decline in functioning and quality of life as a result of cancer treatment. This program is assessed by a Rehabilitation Physician and will develop a plan with the multidisciplinary team for you.

ACTIVATE combines group exercise and small group therapy, including education twice a week for six weeks. The program aims to boost your ability to enjoy an active and fulfilling life.

You can speak with your Treating Specialist and Cancer Care Navigator or treatment team to discuss if ACTIVATE is right for you. Your Cancer Care Navigator can put you in touch with the closest ACTIVATE service.

### Medication support

Our onsite pharmacy is always available to answer any questions you may have about your cancer treatment and provide advice on managing any side effects.

The pharmacy can also assist you with your medication management. You may be taking multiple medications treating other conditions whilst you are undergoing cancer treatment. This can be confusing at the best of times! Our pharmacy team can assist, making it easy for you to keep track and not forget any important medication.

They can also:

- hold your prescriptions ready for you when they need to be dispensed
- conduct medication reviews and work with your GP to ensure your prescriptions are appropriate and up to date
- assist you in accessing clinical trial or compassionate access drugs.

### Managing common side effects

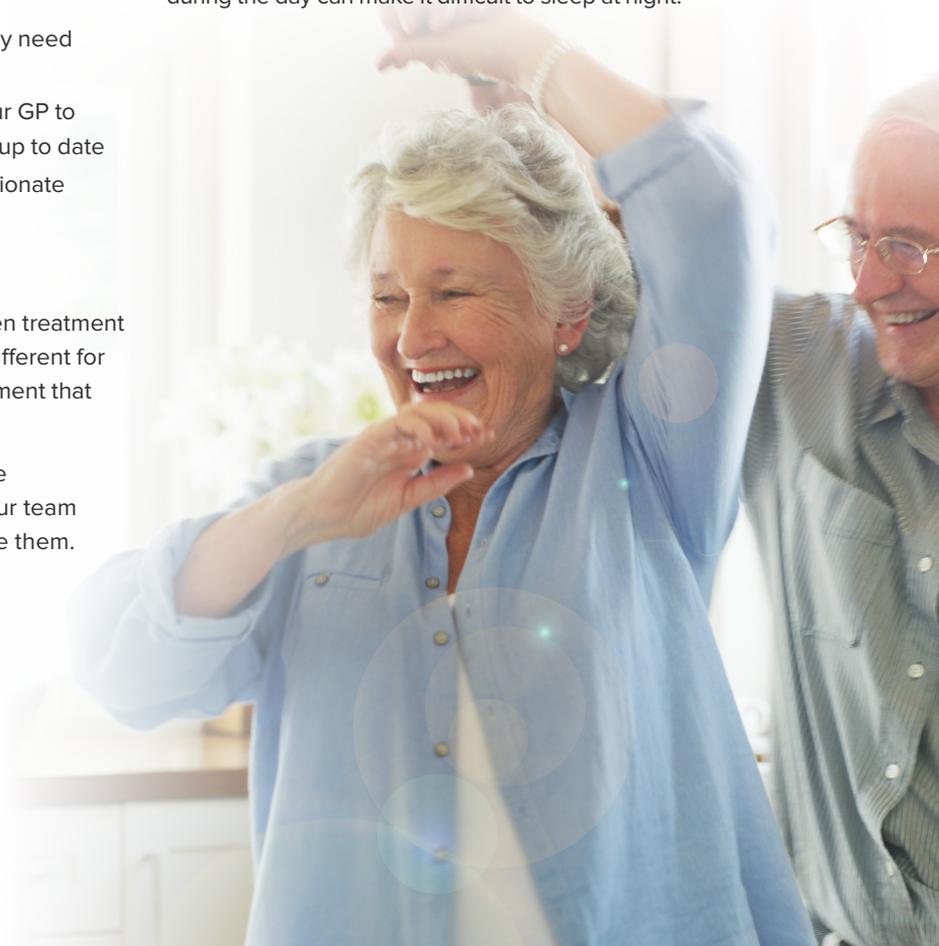
Side effects from cancer treatment can occur when treatment damages your healthy cells. Side effects will be different for each person and will depend on the type of treatment that you have had.

Always speak with your treatment team if you are experiencing any side effects that worry you. Your team will be able to give you advice on how to manage them.

### Fatigue

Fatigue is a common side effect of many cancer treatments. You may feel extremely tired, weak, and run down. Alert your treating team to your symptoms. An exercise program may be suitable to minimise the impact of fatigue from treatment. Talk to your treating specialist, CancerCare navigator physiotherapist or exercise physiologist about this.

While fatigue can be very debilitating, there are some easy ways to manage it. Eating and drinking well, and taking short walks, can help to increase your energy levels. Giving yourself adequate time to rest is also important. However, too much sleep during the day can make it difficult to sleep at night.



**Difficulty sleeping**

Changes to your sleep patterns or difficulty sleeping is common in people being treated for cancer. Sleep problems may be a side effect of the medicines you are taking or could be related to stress and anxiety.

A good sleep routine is essential to help manage your sleep problems. Try to go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each day. Avoid stimulants, like caffeine or screen time, close to bedtime. Instead, relax with a good book or some meditation.

Speak with your treating specialist and treatment team about this and how we can support better sleep patterns, information or therapies.

**Nausea and vomiting**

Some cancer treatment can make you feel sick in your stomach or cause you to vomit.

Drinking water or ginger ale may help to ease this feeling. Relaxation techniques may help you take your mind of it.

There are also medicines available to help control nausea. Speak with your treatment team to see if these are appropriate for you.

**Cancer pain**

You may experience pain from the cancer tumour itself or from your cancer treatment. Pain can affect your quality of life and make it difficult for you to enjoy everyday life.

It is important to work with your treatment team to find a pain control strategy that works for you. This may include medication, physical therapy, or relaxation techniques.

**Change in sexual health**

Many people receiving treatment for cancer notice changes to their sex life. Physical side effects from treatment can reduce your enjoyment of sex. And the emotional stress associated with cancer can reduce your interest in it.

You can speak with your treatment team about ways to manage the physical side effects of your treatment that are affecting your sexual health. You may also like to speak with a psychologist for support on managing the emotional burden of cancer and finding a new normal for your sex life.



# Practical advice and support

Receiving a cancer diagnosis is life changing. It can be difficult to understand how the world around you just keeps moving!

Organising your financial and legal affairs can help you to feel in control of some aspects of your life. For people with advanced stage cancer, it can also help to ensure that you are able to protect your assets and provide for your loved ones in the way that you want.

## Managing your finances

### Costs to consider

The costs associated with your cancer treatment and follow-up care will depend on the type of treatment you receive. In general, your private health insurance will cover most of the costs for treatment that you receive in hospital with Ramsay CancerCare.

You may need to pay additional fees for:

- Your doctor
- Any regular scans
- Allied health services (such as physiotherapy).

You can access a limited number of Medicare-funded allied health appointments through a chronic disease management or mental health plan from your GP. There may be a small gap payment associated with these appointments.

### Getting financial support

Being diagnosed with and treated for cancer can significantly impact your finances and cause financial strain. If this happens, it's important to know there are ways to ease this financial stress.

- You may be able to access a lump sum payment from your superannuation fund on compassionate grounds. This can help cover the costs of treatment, transport or rehabilitation.
- You may be eligible for income protection.
- You may be able to get temporary relief from personal debt or mortgage repayments from your bank/financial institution.

Speak with your superannuation fund, bank or financial advisor to learn more about your options.

## Planning for the future

Receiving a cancer diagnosis can raise questions about your future. It's a good time to review what legal documents you have in place if something was to happen.

### Power of attorney

A power of attorney is a legal document that names a person you have chosen to manage your legal and financial matters. A power of attorney can be general or enduring.

A general power of attorney gives the nominated person authority to access your money and buy or sell property, shares or other assets on your behalf. It ends if you lose the ability to make decisions for yourself (i.e. lose your mental capacity).

An enduring power of attorney gives the nominated person the authority to manage your financial and legal affairs even if you do lose your mental capacity.

It's important to know that a power of attorney does not give the nominated person the ability to make medical decisions on your behalf.

It is important to note that this is general information only, it is important to seek further clarification in relation to your personal circumstances, please seek independent legal advice.

### Advanced care directives

An Advanced Care Directive is a formal document that records your healthcare and treatment wishes in case you become seriously ill and unable to make decisions for yourself.

An Advanced Care Directive can make it easier for your loved ones and healthcare team during times of stress and uncertainty.

In your Advanced Care Directive, you can:

- nominate a person to make medical decisions for you if you are unable to do so yourself
- detail the types of treatment or care you would like or would refuse in a life-threatening situation. For example, whether or not you would like to be resuscitated.

### The importance of having a will

A will ensures your loved ones know your wishes after you pass away. It ensures they are looked after in the way that you want. It can also prevent your family from having to make difficult decisions or deal with financial problems which can occur when wishes are not clear. If you were to pass away without a will, it could take longer to deal with your estate and may mean that your belongings do not go to the people you would have chosen.

# Your treatment planner

Use this treatment planner as a way to keep your important information about your treatment team and appointments all in the one place.

## Personal details

Name

Address

City

State

Postcode

Phone/mobile

Email

## Healthcare cards

Medicare number

Expiry

Health insurance company

Policy number

Level of cover

Healthcare concession card (if applicable)

Expiry

## Appointment tracker

Appointment with

Date

Time

Location

Reason for appointment

Notes

## Appointment tracker

Appointment with

Date

Time

Location

Reason for appointment

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### **Appointment tracker**

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### **Appointment tracker**

Appointment with

Date

Time

Location

Reason for appointment

Notes



Notes

**Disclaimer**

The information in this booklet is general in nature and does not replace the advice of your treatment team. This booklet has been developed using the best available evidence and information at the time of publication. However, changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of the information. Always speak with your treatment team before making any change to your current treatment or therapy or starting a new treatment or therapy.

