

Sight or hearing

Changes to your sight or vision can be a symptom of some types of cancer, such as brain tumours and cancers of the eye. Symptoms include double or blurred vision, losing part of your sight, seeing flashing lights or shadows and having brown or dark patches on the white area of the eye.

Changes in hearing can be a symptom of some types of head and neck cancers.

Some cancer treatments, such as some types of chemotherapy and targeted therapies can affect your sight and hearing. They may make your eyes dry, sore, red, itchy, watery and sensitive to light. Tell your doctor straight away if you have any of these symptoms. They may arrange for you to have tests to check what is causing them. Some treatments can make it more likely for you to develop a cloudy patch in the lens of your eye (cataract). Cataracts can be treated with a small operation.

Some cancer drug treatments can cause hearing loss, ringing in your ears (tinnitus) and affect your ability to hear high-pitched sounds. Radiotherapy to the head and neck may also cause changes in your hearing. Hearing changes may get better after treatment ends but can be permanent.

Your cancer doctor or nurse will tell you if the treatment you have is likely to affect your sight or hearing. Getting used to changes in your sight or hearing can take time, but support is available. Support groups can be a good place to share experiences and find out what other people have found helpful.

Tips for managing sight or hearing problems

- Have your eyes checked regularly and tell your doctor if you have any problems with your sight. You should also let your optician know that you are having cancer treatment.
- Do not drive or operate machinery if your vision is affected.
- If your eyes become dry and irritated, use eyedrops regularly.
- You can ask for written information to be provided in large print. Some organisations, including Macmillan, can do this or provide information as an audio CD or tracks you can listen to online. You can also ask your doctor if it is okay to record their conversations with you.
- Get your hearing checked if you have hearing loss. You may be able to use a hearing aid.
- Tell people you have problems with hearing and ask them to speak clearly and not too fast.
- It can help to find a well-lit place to have your conversation and ask the person talking to face you.
- Try to get rid of background noise such as the TV when talking to people.
- At hospital appointments, ask the doctor or nurse to write things down for you.
- If you have tinnitus, try using other sounds to distract you. Some people use background noises to distract them. This may be something simple like playing the radio or having an electric fan on. There are devices specially designed to produce sounds for people with tinnitus.
- Tinnitus can be made worse by stress and anxiety. Learning ways to help you relax can lower your stress levels. Your specialist nurse or GP may be able to refer you for therapies that can aid relaxation.

Local resources:

| Resource | Contact details |
|----------|-----------------|
| | |

National resources:

| Resource | Contact details |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The British Tinnitus Association (BTA) • Hearing Link • Action on Hearing Loss • Royal National Institute of Blind People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.tinnitus.org.uk • www.hearinglink.org • www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk • www.rnib.org.uk |

Further information

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/eye-cancer-ocular-melanoma

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on be.macmillan.org.uk

- Understanding head and neck cancer
- Managing the late effects of head and neck cancer treatment
- Understanding primary brain tumours

More information and support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit macmillan.org.uk

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these visit macmillan.org.uk/otherformats or call our support line.