



Magnesium and Cancer

Information for Patients and Carers

What is magnesium and what does my body need it for?

Magnesium is a mineral used by the body for functions including; immune system, bone health, muscle and nerve function, maintaining blood pressure and heart rhythm. Magnesium also helps your body to use energy and protein from your food and drinks.

What are some of the causes of low magnesium?

Some chemotherapy drugs can change the way your kidneys function. Your kidneys may let go of too much magnesium in your urine or not reabsorb enough. This makes it difficult to maintain a magnesium level within normal limits.

You may have heard of the term hypomagnesaemia. This is the medical term used to describe a low magnesium level in the blood.

Other factors that can lead to low magnesium include:

- Sickness
- Diarrhoea
- Reduced eating and drinking
- Malabsorption
- High output stoma

What can my healthcare team do about it?

The management and treatment of a low magnesium level can vary between individuals depending on the cause, and also, your blood magnesium level.

You may have blood tests to check your magnesium level. You may be offered supplementation to increase your magnesium level. This could be intravenous (IV) supplementation or oral medication.

What can I do about it?

I am eating and drinking well and regularly having foods containing magnesium

If you are receiving a platinum-based chemotherapy treatment, changes to your diet may not improve your magnesium level. Your magnesium level should return to normal when your treatment ends.

I have lost my appetite and I don't have a regular eating pattern

If you are receiving a platinum-based chemotherapy treatment, changes to your diet may not improve your magnesium level. Your magnesium level should return to normal when your treatment ends.

You may still wish to include foods containing magnesium in your diet:

- Green leafy vegetables (spinach, green beans, kale, okra)
- Peas, beans, pulses
- Meat and fish
- Nuts (peanuts, cashews, brazil nuts)
- Wholegrains (oats, barley, rye, quinoa, cereals, brown or seeded bread, wholewheat pasta, brown rice)

I have been prescribed a magnesium supplement

Continue to take any medication as prescribed.

Loose stools can be a side effect of some oral magnesium medication. Discuss this with your healthcare professional if this is problematic for you.