

## What should I do if I think my child has CIPN?

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You should tell your doctor or nurse who can then have the physiotherapist or occupational therapist review, assess and make recommendations for your child.

## Where can I find more information?

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For more information please contact the therapy departments on (02) 9845 3369 and ask for the oncology physiotherapist or oncology occupational therapist.

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# Management of chemotherapy- induced peripheral neuropathy

In the paediatric oncology population

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### Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy

Level 2, Outpatients Street, The Children's Hospital at Westmead  
Corner Hawkesbury Road and Hainsworth Street  
Locked Bag 4001 Westmead NSW 2145  
Phone: (02) 9845 3369 | [schn.health.nsw.gov.au](http://schn.health.nsw.gov.au)



## Why has your family been provided with this handout?

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Cancer treatment can sometimes cause side effects that change or upset a child's daily activity or mobility. Your child has been or is being treated with chemotherapy medicine that has a higher chance of causing a condition called Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy (CIPN).

This handout aims to explain to you what CIPN is, what to look out for, who to tell if there's a problem and what can be done to help.

## What is CIPN?

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CIPN is a side effect of some chemotherapy medicine. CIPN can cause weakness and sensory changes in the feet and hands. Weakness in the muscles can lead to muscles becoming tight which can affect how a child walks, balances, grasps objects and writes. Sensory changes can result in abnormal feelings and pain when the affected areas are touched.

CIPN does not occur in every child who is given chemotherapy medicine, but it is a common side effect. Best outcomes are achieved when CIPN is identified early and a management program is commenced. Most often CIPN resolves within three months after completion of chemotherapy, however, some symptoms may persist.

## Are there certain chemotherapy drugs that are more likely to cause CIPN?

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### Children who receive any of the following may be at risk:

- Vincristine
- Vinblastine
- Cisplatin
- Carboplatin
- Etoposide

## What signs should we look out for?

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- 'Pins and needles' sensation
- Pain
- Numbness
- Extra sensitivity to touch
- Weakness
- Difficulties with walking or balance
- Difficulties with hand skills

## What can be done to help with CIPN?

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Treatment of CIPN requires a team approach due to the wide range of symptoms.

Treatment may include some or all of the following:

- **Strengthening exercises:** Exercises aim to strengthen muscles affected by CIPN.
- **Stretching exercises:** Stretches help your child to keep moving their arms and legs, therefore helping to prevent their muscles from becoming tight.
- **Walking:** The aim is to help your child walk as normally as possible. Walking is also a great way of keeping up your child's fitness.
- **Desensitisation exercises:** Exercises that are completed with various textures and temperatures to decrease the sensitivity to touch your child may be experiencing.
- **Orthotics:** An orthotic is a device that helps support a part of the body. The orthotic may be used to help stretch a muscle or to help weak muscles when your child is walking.
- **Splints:** A resting hand splint may be used to help stretch the muscles in the forearm and hand, similar to the orthotics.
- **Pain relief:** Learning how to relieve pain with gentle exercise and pacing of activities.

These therapy activities aim to reduce the impact of complications from CIPN, but it is important to note that they will not change the course of CIPN.

Medicines can also be used to manage the pain associated with CIPN. The best outcomes are achieved when medications are used in conjunction with an active physiotherapy or occupational therapy program.