



# Quality Cancer Care for Your Golden Years

A guide to the **GOLDEN** Programme

# What's in this handbook?

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Introduction</b>                | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Eating Well</b>                 | <b>3</b>  |
| • Nutrition Tips                   |           |
| • Recipes                          |           |
| • Herbal Medicines and Supplements |           |
| <b>Living Well</b>                 | <b>12</b> |
| • Lifestyle Management             |           |
| • Fall Prevention                  |           |
| • Staying Active with Exercises    |           |
| <b>Knowing My Medications</b>      | <b>26</b> |
| • Good Medication Habits           |           |
| • Chemotherapy Management          |           |
| <b>Community Support</b>           | <b>36</b> |
| <b>Resources</b>                   | <b>39</b> |
| <b>My Journey</b>                  | <b>40</b> |
| • My Milestones                    |           |
| • My Blood Pressure Log            |           |
| • My Exercise Log                  |           |
| • Notes                            |           |
| <b>Afterword</b>                   | <b>45</b> |

# Introduction

## The Golden Programme

If you are over the age of 65 and have been diagnosed with cancer, you should know that you are not alone. In fact, most people who are diagnosed with cancer and cancer survivors are older than 65.

Most older cancer patients are worried that their age determines their health and treatment outcomes. Your age is just one of the many factors that your cancer care team considers when planning your treatment. Your overall health is more informative to the medical team than just your age alone. There are challenges that are more common when you are older. Knowing about these challenges and how they can affect your cancer treatment is important.

That is why the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS), the National University Hospital (NUH) and the Ng Teng Fong General Hospital (NTFGH) have introduced the Geriatric Oncology LongituDinal End to eNd (GOLDEN) programme.

This is a comprehensive programme that brings you, your family, and a multi-disciplinary team of healthcare professionals together to develop a treatment plan that suits your healthcare needs and personal goals. If you have family members with you, we offer care navigation and caregiver support for them too. With the right mindset and an optimal treatment plan, you can still lead a good life.

Our Geriatric Oncology team is here to support you and your loved ones in your cancer journey.

## **The Golden Handbook**

This handbook is your guide to some tips on how to live well, eat well and maintain an active lifestyle during your cancer treatment. There are also some health tips to help you manage your medications and treatment.



# Eating Well

With a cancer diagnosis, adequate nutrition is essential for patients to maintain their energy levels and improve their overall sense of well-being.

We will cover tips on how to get the most out of your food intake and included some fun recipes to try at home.

A diet rich in energy and protein provides your body the nutrition it requires for your best chance of recovery.

The right diet can promote strength and help combat the common side effects that may arise from treatments, such as constipation and diarrhoea. This will greatly improve your quality of life and help you feel as strong as you can.



# Tips to Optimise Your Nutritional Intake



Enjoy a meal with family and friends



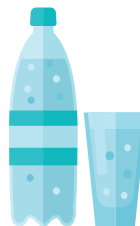
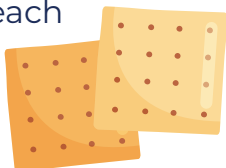
Listen to your favourite music while you eat

Eat 4-6 small meals a day instead of 3 large meals



Take advantage of days when your appetite is at its best to eat more

Keep nourishing snacks such as cream crackers, energy bars and nutritional supplements within easy reach



Take fluids after meals. Drinking before meals makes you feel full and reduces your appetite

# Pro-tips for Protein!

Proteins are the building blocks of your body and you will need more protein than the average person to recover from the rigorous cancer treatment.

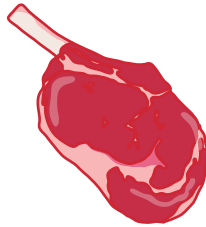
A must in every meal — food high in protein is important in maintaining muscle health.

## Here are some good sources of protein:

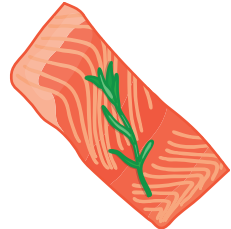
### *Meat Options*



Chicken and Eggs



Red Meat



Fish and Seafood

### *Vegetarian Options*



Beans and Legumes



Dairy



Tofu/Soy-based food

# Recipes

Here are some recipes using common ingredients that you may already have in your pantry. Quick and easy to make, yet nutritious and delicious!

## Let's Cook: Nasi Goreng!

Fried Rice, more commonly known as Nasi Goreng is a simple yet versatile meal that uses a few simple ingredients to pack a flavourful punch.

### **Ingredients (Serves 4)**

2 cups of cooked rice  
( $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of uncooked rice)  
1 clove of garlic  
1 small shallot  
1 sliced red chilli  
1 tbsp kecap manis (Sweet soy sauce) or 2 tsp of dark soy sauce and a pinch of brown sugar  
1 tbsp soy sauce  
Ground white pepper  
4 eggs

### **Optional**

Chopped scallions  
Sliced cucumber  
Sliced tomato  
6 medium-sized shrimp  
Kerupuk (Shrimp crackers)



### **Step 1**

Heat 2 tablespoons of cooking oil in a wok. Add garlic, shallots and red chilli. Saute until fragrant.

### **Step 2**

Add shrimp, then stir-fry till just slightly cooked. Pour the rice into the wok, followed by kecap manis and soy sauce.

### **Step 3**

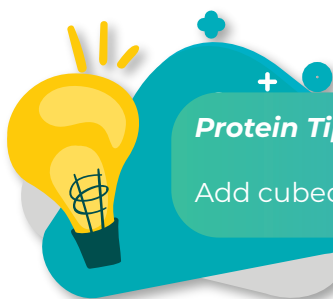
Stir well to evenly distribute the sauce. Add a couple of dashes of white pepper, then stir to combine all the ingredients. Transfer to a serving dish.

### **Step 4**

Fry each egg individually and add chopped scallions in a small bowl then fill it to the brim with the fried rice.

### **Step 5**

Place fried egg over the rice. Garnish with sliced tomatoes, cucumbers and shrimp crackers. (optional)



#### **Protein Tip!**

Add cubed chicken breast or thigh for more protein!

## Let's Cook: *Bubur Cha Cha!*

Ever present in most dessert stalls, Bubur Cha Cha is a staple dessert made from sweet creamy coconut milk broth with chewy chunks of sweet potatoes, yam, and other starchy morsels. Cool and refreshing in hot Singapore weather, Bubur Cha Cha is an easy-to-make, yet versatile dessert.

### ***Ingredients (Serves 4)***

100 ml Coconut Milk  
2 pcs Pandan leaves  
20 gm Sago/tapioca pearl  
40 gm Sugar  
200 gm Sweet potato - purple  
or orange (peeled and cut into  
cubes)  
200 gm Yam (peeled and cut  
into cubes)  
500 ml Water

Recipe source: Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)



### **Step 1**

Cook the sago in boiling water until transparent. Strain pearls and run under tap water to wash away the excess starch. Drain well and set aside.

### **Step 2**

Boil a pot of water and place the diced sweet potato and yam cubes on a plate. Place the plate on top of a steaming tray and steam for 20 to 30 minutes until soft.

### **Step 3**

Add the water and coconut milk into a pot and bring the mixture to a boil.

### **Step 4**

Add pandan leaves and sugar to the coconut milk and water mixture while stirring gently.

### **Step 5**

Rinse and strain the cooked sago with tap water again before adding to the coconut milk and water mixture.

### **Step 6**

Add the steamed sweet potato and yam cubes. Discard the pandan leaves, divide into 4 portions and serve.  
(Note: Chill in a fridge first, if you want to serve it cold.)

#### **Health Tip!**

For those with Diabetes, swap out sugar for artificial sweeteners like equal, stevia or splenda.



# Herbal Medicines and Supplements

Herbal medicines and supplements are popular options for improving health and treating common ailments.

However, not all supplements are safe or effective when it comes to treating cancer or relieving treatment side effects. It is important to always discuss with your doctor before taking any over-the-counter supplements or herbal medication.





## ***Herbal medications and supplements*** **- misconceptions and truths!**

### ***Fiction***



They contain substances that can “cure” cancer.



“Natural” always means safer.



Spacing supplements and herbal medicines away from western medicines by a few hours can easily prevent clashes.



The more supplements or herbal medicines, the better.

### ***Fact***



Limited scientific evidence to prove claims of cure.

These products may not be regulated by the Health Science Authority (HSA).



Some products may be safe, but some may worsen the side effects or reduce the effectiveness of your cancer treatment.



The effects of these substances in your body may remain longer than expected.



Not all supplements or herbal medicines may be suitable for you.

# Living Well

Adequate exercise and self-care can help you be more resilient to cancer treatment and improve long-term health and quality of life.

This section will explore everything from managing your new lifestyle and staying active to preventing falls. It will also include exercises to help you stay active.

## Lifestyle Management

Cancer, together with its treatments, may cause you to experience changes to your physical and mental well-being as well as affect your energy levels. It is important to recognise these changes and explore ways to participate in meaningful activities that support your wellness and journey to recovery.



# Conserving Energy

Fatigue is a common side effect of both cancer and its treatment. Here are the 4 “P”s to maximise your energy.

## Prioritise your energy

- Decide which activities are more important to you
- Postpone or skip less important activities
- Pass on tasks to your trusted friends and family



## Plan ahead

- Take note of when your energy levels will be at the highest and schedule important activities around these peaks
- Remember to plan rest breaks in between strenuous activities





## **Pace yourself**

- Allow yourself to do one thing at a time
- Break down big tasks into smaller parts
- Don't forget to take regular breaks between activities

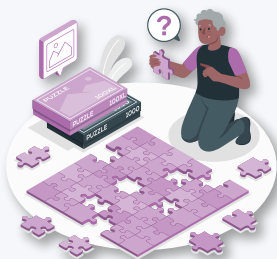
---

## **Position and place**

- Sit down while doing tasks
- Place commonly used items at waist height (e.g. on the table or on short cabinets) to minimise needing to bend over or tiptoe to reach for them

# Self-Care Activities

Here are some activities that can help you recharge and relax during your free time.



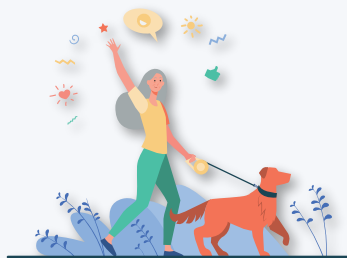
Play memory games like jigsaw puzzles, sudoku or crosswords



Do simple brain exercises such as meditation, art classes and having thoughtful conversations



Get plenty of sleep



Engage in safe physical activities

Check out this 15 mins workout



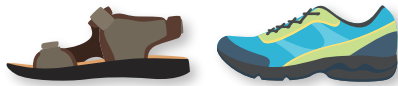
# Fall Prevention

Do you know that older cancer patients are 15% to 20% more prone to falls?

With serious consequences such as fractures, fall prevention should not be taken lightly.

***Speak to the Occupational Therapist for a fall prevention plan made especially for you***

## General Advice



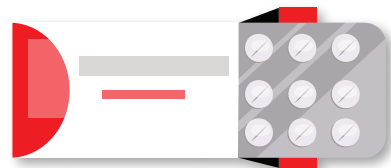
Wear appropriate footwear and avoid slippers



Ask for assistance if you are feeling unwell



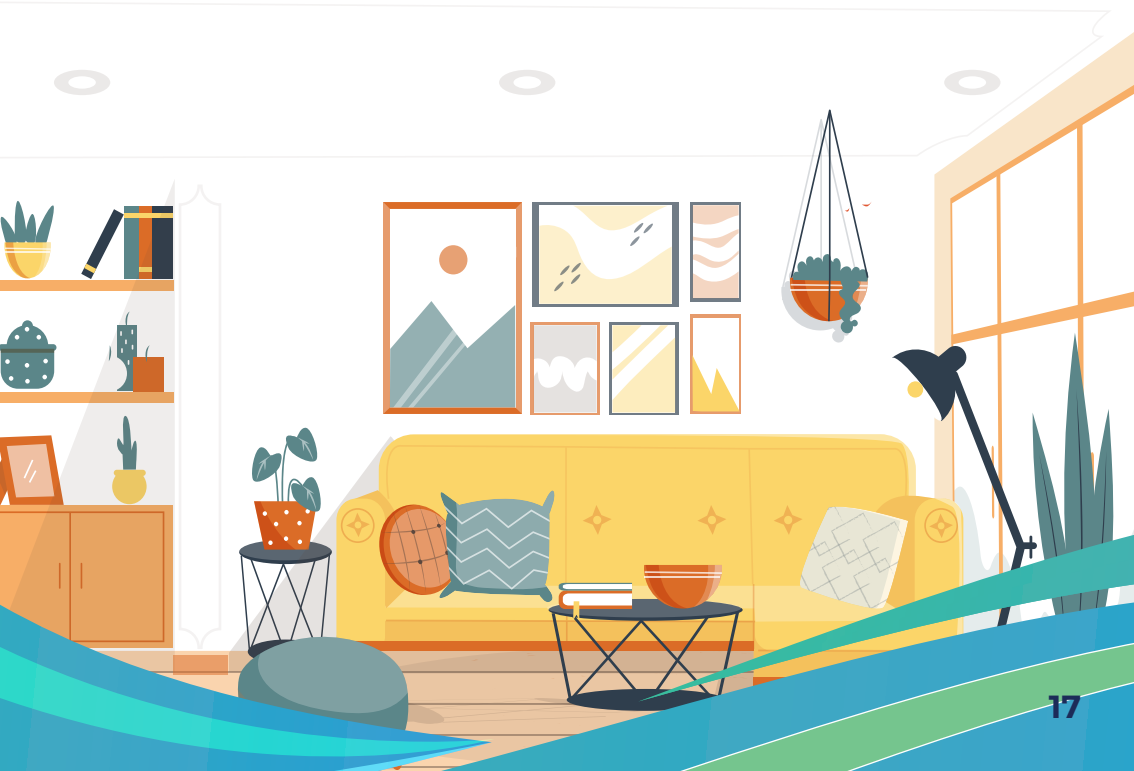
Do not rush or move too quickly



Follow your medication routine closely and take note of any side effects

## Advice for the home

- Remove clutter and loose rugs on the floor
- Avoid wearing house slippers
- Install grab bars around the home and toilets
- Place anti-slip mats or apply anti-slip solution on slippery surfaces
- Use a sturdy chair for sitting
- Ensure adequate lighting and have night lights within reach
- Place commonly used items within easy reach



## Advice for outside

- Plan your route ahead of appointments
- Use traffic lights and pedestrian crossings - avoid jaywalking and taking shortcuts
- Avoid uneven pathways



## Advice for public transport

- Do not rush to get on a bus / train
- Do not hesitate to request for a seat if you need it
- Remain seated when the bus / train is moving
- Keep your hands free to hold on to handrails





# Staying Active

As you age, consider a range of activities to maintain your fitness. Participation in regular exercise is an important part of health management.

Finding suitable exercises for yourself and learning how to prevent over-exertion and injuries are crucial in helping you remain active.

Regular exercise helps with fatigue management and may reduce side effects of cancer treatment.



## Brisk Walking

Start with 10-15 minutes of comfortable walking/brisk walking. Increase duration to 20-30min. You should feel like you are working slightly hard but able to speak.

- Improves cardiovascular health
- Strengthens bones, muscles, and joints
- Improves strength and balance with minimal stress



## Tai Chi

- Low impact
- Strengthens your heart and lungs
- Improves body control and motor function



# Strength Exercises

Regular strength training (2-3 times a week) is one of the most effective things you can do to stay active throughout your golden years. It minimises age-related muscle loss, keeping your bones and joints strong and supple, preventing falls while combating cognitive decline.

The exercises in the next few pages serve as a guide to help you get started.



## Seated stretches

- Improves joint suppleness and flexibility

### Instructions:



#### 1. Neck stretch -

Tilt your head to the side and gently stretch neck muscles for 5-10 seconds



#### 2. Trunk stretch -

Reach over your head and to the left or right. Stretch the side of your trunk for 5-10 seconds



#### 3. Chest stretch -

With your hands apart, bring them as far back as you can, stretching your chest for 5-10 seconds



#### 4. Hamstring stretch -

Straighten your leg by pushing down gently from the knee, pull your ankle towards you for 10 seconds

## Seated exercises

- Perfect for older patients with limited mobility



### 1. Forward Punches -

At shoulder height, punch forward one hand at a time, repeat 5-10 times



### 2. Hand Raise -

Stretch your hands upwards and then back down, repeat 5-10 times



### 3. Thigh Lifts -

With legs bent, raise your knee towards your chest as high you can, repeat 5-10 times



### 4. Calf Lifts -

With legs bent, straighten your leg until your ankles are hip level, repeat 5-10 times

## Standing exercises

- Improves overall strength and stamina



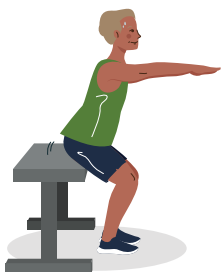
1. Forward leg lifts, repeat 5-10 times



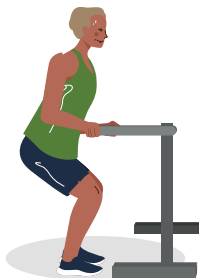
2. Lateral leg lifts, repeat 5-10 times



3. Backward leg lifts, repeat 5-10 times



4. Sitting squats, repeat 5-10 times



5. Half squats, repeat 5-10 times



6. Assisted push ups, repeat 5-10 times



7. Tip toes, repeat 5-10 times



8. Marching with swinging arms, 10-15 minutes daily



9. Regular walks, 10-15 minutes daily



## **STOP and seek medical help**

if you experience the following:



Chest pain  
or tightness



Shortness of breath



Sudden weakness  
or numbness,  
and confusion



Nausea  
and vomiting



Dizziness and  
cold sweat



Loss of balance

# Knowing My Medications

## Good Medication Habits

Taking the correct dosage of medication at the right time is the key to recovery. This is to ensure that the medication is administered effectively to treat your illness.

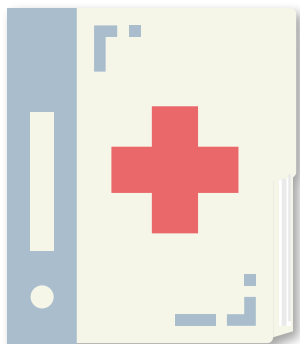




## 3 tips for good medication management.

### *Tip 1*

Keep an up-to-date record of your medical information and bring them to every doctor's appointment.

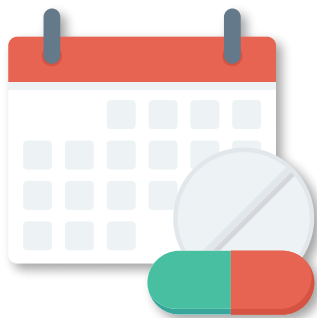


This includes all current medications and doses as well as any patches, eye-drops, injections and over-the-counter medications and supplements.

Don't forget to note down any medication allergies!

### *Tip 2*

Take your medications on time. Do not stop or alter your medication dose without your doctor's knowledge.

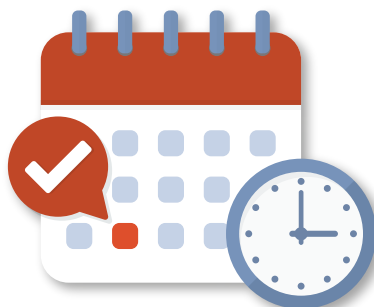


Taking the wrong medication or dosage can be dangerous to your health. (e.g. allergic reactions and unwanted side effects)

## *Here are some ways to keep organised*

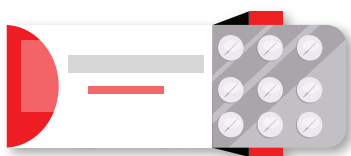


Set a reminder on your alarm clock or smartphone



Make a checkmark on the calendar after each dose


This tip is especially helpful for medications taken on specific days each week



Keep your medications in their original packaging



Use a pillbox to keep your medications organised

 Do not keep your oral cancer medication in the same pillbox as your other medications

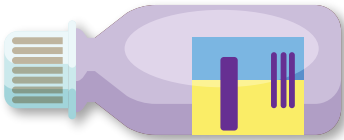
### **Tip 3**

Store and handle your medication properly

***Some medications require extra handling precautions for your own safety.***



Always wash your hands before and after handling medications. Caregivers should wear gloves when handling oral chemotherapy



Store your medications in a place that is away from water sources, direct sunlight and excessive heat. Always check the medication label to see if the medicine requires refrigeration



Be sure to keep medications out of reach of children or pets

# Chemotherapy Management

There are several cancer treatment options, and some may require a combination of treatments. Your doctor will recommend the appropriate treatment according to your cancer type and stage.

One can experience some side effects while receiving chemotherapy. Learning how to manage your side effects can help to ease your treatment journey.

**Here are some chemotherapy side effects and tips on how to cope with them.**

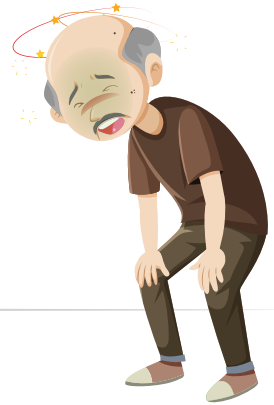
## **Loss of Appetite**

- Have 4 to 6 small frequent meals daily instead of 3 large meals
- Take oral nutritional supplements and protein rich foods as recommended when your appetite is at its best, usually in the morning
- Use a mouthwash or gargle to get rid of any bitter or metallic taste in your mouth



## Nausea and Vomiting

- Take your anti-vomiting medications as prescribed
- Stay hydrated between meals and have small snacks throughout the day
- Proceed to the Emergency Department if you have more than 3-4 vomiting episodes in 24 hours despite taking your prescribed medication



## Mucositis

- A good oral care regimen is important to prevent mucositis
- Brush your teeth with a soft bristle toothbrush and use a mouthwash post meals
- Avoid wearing ill-fitting dentures. Visit your dentist to customise a new pair of dentures if your current pair no longer fits you well
- Allow hot food and drinks to cool down to room temperature prior to consumption to minimise discomfort
- Use the topical gels or gargles prescribed by your doctor for mouth ulcers



## Diarrhoea

- Take anti-diarrhoea medications as prescribed by your doctor
- Avoid milk, caffeinated, sugary or carbonated drinks and fatty, oily, spicy or sweet food
- Increase fluid intake from 1.5L to 2L/ day
- Use a barrier cream to protect your skin and prevent abrasions
- Inform your doctor or nurse if your diarrhoea is persistent



## Fever (Temperature $\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ )

- Preventive measures to avoid an infection:
  - Practice good personal and hand hygiene
  - Avoid close contact with people with infections, cough or flu symptoms
  - Avoid crowded places
  - Do not consume raw or partially cooked food
- Daily temperature monitoring
- Visit the Emergency Department if your temperature is persistently above  $38^{\circ}\text{C}$  with chills



## Pain

- Gently massage the painful area to relieve pain and tension
- Take analgesia as prescribed by your doctor.  
Ensure that you are taking the correct dose
- Discuss with your doctor if your prescribed analgesia is ineffective

---

### **Loss of sensation or tingling sensation from finger and toe tips upwards (Peripheral neuropathy)**

- Massage and take a lukewarm bath to relieve the tingling sensation
- Inspect your hands and feet regularly to detect cuts or injuries which may have been missed
- Avoid flip flops and wear footwear that provides your feet with good support to ensure stability and avoid falls
- Report any new or worsening numbness or sensation changes to your doctor

## Dry skin

- Use a gentle and moisturising body wash when showering. Avoid antiseptic body washes as they may further dry your skin
- Do NOT shower in hot water
- Avoid vigorous scrubbing of the skin while in the shower and gently pat skin dry
- Apply an unscented moisturising lotion or cream to your skin after your shower
- Avoid perfume and aftershaves containing alcohol
- Keep well hydrated with fluid intake of about 1.5L to 2L/ day



## Insomnia

- Establish a routine sleep pattern
- Clear bowels and bladder prior to bedtime
- Avoid consuming excessive amounts of fluids 2 hours prior to bedtime
- Refrain from lengthy naps in the day
- Take a break from bright digital or TV screens at least 30 minutes before bedtime





## **Lethargy**

- Take short 30-minute power naps during the day
  - Maintain your stamina with regular light and seated exercises
  - Speak to your doctor if your lethargy is worsening or affecting your daily activities
- 

## **Constipation**

- Drink 1.5L to 2L of fluids (6 – 8 glasses) per day, if not on fluid restriction
- Have 2 shares of vegetables or fiber per day, if not on a low fiber diet
- Light exercise or walking can help increase bowel movements
- Laxatives can help you to clear your bowels if the above lifestyle measures are ineffective

# Community Support

Being diagnosed with cancer is a life-changing event. The amount of information can be overwhelming and you may have multiple concerns regarding finances, care plans and emotional well being.

If you face any challenges coping with your cancer treatment, do speak to your medical doctor who will refer you to a Medical Social Worker to address your concerns. Your Medical Social Worker can introduce you to a wide range of care services in the community to meet your needs.

## Home Care

Get top quality care in the comfort of your own home. Trained nurses will provide you with the care you require.

## Services Available

- Meals on Wheels
- Home Personal Care
- Befriending Services
- Home Hospice



# You are never alone

Your GOLDEN journey does not need to be a solo one. Joining a support group is a great way to interact with others who share similar experiences in their cancer journey.

## Benefits

01

### A Trusted Network

Through a support group, you can build your network of friends where you can offer others emotional support and receive it in return.

02

### A Safe Space

Discover a space where you can share your experiences and learn new coping strategies from others.

03

### A Community

Make friends with others who are going through the same cancer journey as you.



## Centre-Based Care: Building a community

Here is where you will find communal spaces for seniors to catch up with peers, accompanied by daytime care and social services.

### Services Available

- Social Day Care
- Seniors Activity Centre
- Day Rehabilitation Centre
- Hospice Day Care



## Residential Care: 24/7 assistance and care

Round the clock access to comprehensive eldercare services and resources such as skilled nursing and medical facilities.

### Services Available

- Community Hospital
- Nursing Home
- Inpatient Hospice



## Resources

For more information, check out these other organisations!

### **Agency for Integrated Care**



[www.aic.sg](http://www.aic.sg)

### **Singapore Cancer Society**



[www.singaporecancersociety.org.sg](http://www.singaporecancersociety.org.sg)

### **Singapore Hospice Council**



[www.singaporehospice.org.sg/palliativecare/](http://www.singaporehospice.org.sg/palliativecare/)

# My Milestones

Track your journey and milestones with this handy log!

## My Goals

- 
- 
- 

## My Achievements

- 
- 
- 

## My Reminders

- 
- 
-

# My Blood Pressure Log

Name:  My Target BP:

|                                   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <div>MON</div> <div>Date:</div>   | <div>AM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> | <div>PM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> |
| <div>TUES</div> <div>Date:</div>  | <div>AM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> | <div>PM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> |
| <div>WED</div> <div>Date:</div>   | <div>AM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> | <div>PM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> |
| <div>THURS</div> <div>Date:</div> | <div>AM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> | <div>PM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> |
| <div>FRI</div> <div>Date:</div>   | <div>AM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> | <div>PM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> |
| <div>SAT</div> <div>Date:</div>   | <div>AM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> | <div>PM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> |
| <div>SUN</div> <div>Date:</div>   | <div>AM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> | <div>PM</div> <div><div>BP</div><div>HR</div></div> |

# Exercise Log

## Goals:

### Brisk Walk Exercise


Start with 10-15 minutes of comfortable walking/brisk walking. Increase duration to 20-30 minutes. You should feel like you are working slightly hard but able to speak.

### Strength exercise

2-3 times/week or follow your therapist’s advice

| Date            | Aerobic exercise | Strength exercise | Symptoms/Remarks |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
| Total Duration: |                  |                   |                  |





| Date            | Aerobic exercise | Strength exercise | Symptoms/Remarks |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
|                 |                  |                   |                  |
| Total Duration: |                  |                   |                  |

## Notes

[illegible]

# Afterword

We hope that this guide has been useful to you and that you have learned useful tips to help you navigate the journey ahead. Please remember to check in with your doctor or healthcare team before attempting anything too strenuous.

Remember, you are not alone. The **GOLDEN** team is here to support you and your loved ones in your cancer journey.

For more information, visit our website at [www.ncis.com.sg/GO](http://www.ncis.com.sg/GO)

*The information provided in this publication is meant purely for educational purposes and may not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. You should seek the advice of your doctor or a qualified healthcare provider before starting any treatment or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical conditions.*

*Information is correct at time of printing (September 2022) and subject to revision without prior notice.*

*© 2022 Geriatric Oncology Service, National University Cancer Institute, Singapore, National University Health System. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission in writing from the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore.*



SCAN ME  
TO VISIT OUR  
WEBSITE

## Contact us

For more information, visit [www.ncis.com.sg/GO](http://www.ncis.com.sg/GO)

### **National University Hospital**

Medical Centre Level 10,  
5 Lower Kent Ridge Road  
Singapore 119074  
Tel: 6773 7888  
Email: [CancerApptLine@nuhs.edu.sg](mailto:CancerApptLine@nuhs.edu.sg)

### **Ng Teng Fong General Hospital**

Tower A - NTFGH Clinics, Level 7  
A72 JurongHealth -  
NCIS Cancer Services | Haematology  
1 Jurong East St 21 Singapore 609606  
Tel: 6908 2222  
Email: [appointment@nuhs.edu.sg](mailto:appointment@nuhs.edu.sg)



Supported by: **JurongHealth**  
Fund

