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| **ABOUT MSSC*** If you have a type of cancer that has spread to a bone, you need to know about spinal cord compression and the warning signs.
* The aim of this leaflet explains what to look out for, and what you should do if you have any warning signs.
* If you can recognise these early warning signs and get treated quickly, permanent damage may be avoided.

***What is metastic spinal cord compression (MSSC)?**** The spinal cord is a bundle of nerves that runs from the brain down the back. It is surrounded by the bones of the spine. The spinal cord provides nerves to the body including the bladder, arms and legs.
* If you have a tumour in the bones of the spine (vertebrae) or in the tissues around the spinal cord, it can cause pressure (compression) on the spinal cord. This can cause pain, altered sensation and weakness. If not treated early this can become permanent.
* Spinal cord compression is not common and the risk of cord compression is small even if you have a secondary cancer in the spine.

***What are the warning signs of MSSC?**** Pain or tenderness in your neck or back that is severe, distressing or different from your usual pain.
* Severe pain in your lower back that is getting worse or doesn’t go away.
 |  | * Pain in your back that stops you from sleeping.
* A narrow band of pain down the arm or leg or around the body.
* Numbness, pins and needles or tingling in your arms or legs.
* Weakness or difficulties in using your arms or legs. You might notice your legs giving way or have unexplained falls.
* Bladder or bowel problems – loss of control (incontinence) or not being able to empty your bladder.

These symptoms can be caused by a number of problems, but it is important to let your doctor know so they can rule out MSSC.***What should I do if I develop any warning signs?**** Speak to a doctor or nurse as soon as possible. You can contact your cancer doctor or nurse or your GP. Alternatively contact Michael Sobell Hospice on 0203 824 1268.
* Describe your symptoms and explain that you are worried that you may have spinal cord compression and that you need to be seen urgently.
* Show the doctor or nurse this fact sheet.
* Don’t delay. Ring someone straight away even if it is a weekend or a holiday period.

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| ***What will happen next?**** A doctor needs to examine you. If the doctor suspects that you may have MSSC they will advise you to stay flat in bed and arrange a scan of your spine.
* The doctor may prescribe steroids for you as these reduce pressure and swelling around nerve tissue.
* If you have MSSC radiotherapy, surgery or chemotherapy are all options for treatment depending on the type of cancer, which part of the spine is affected and your general health.

***Where can I find more information?***[**www.cancerresearchuk.org**](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org) **/** [**www.macmllan.org.uk**](http://www.macmllan.org.uk)***Information for healthcare professionals**** This patient has cancer and is at risk of MSSC.
* If they have any symptoms listed in this leaflet please consider MSSC as a possible diagnosis and discuss further management with the patient’s Oncology Team.

***Useful contact details*****Doctor’s name** **……………………………………………………………..****Cancer Nurse’s name …………………………………………………….****Hospital …………………………………………………………………….****Contact No. ………………………………………………………………..** |  | Spinal Cord Compression: Definition and Patient Education**PATIENT INFORMATON LEAFLET****Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression** |
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