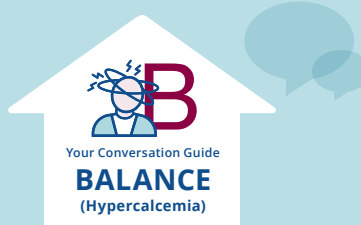







Be Prepared: Palliative Care Emergencies in the Home

A Tool for Patients and Caregivers



This tool helps you know the actions you can take and reassuring words to use if your loved one is experiencing an imbalance of calcium in their blood. Your healthcare provider will review the actions with you.

Actions you can take	Comforting Words
<p>Keep hydrated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinking fluids can help lower calcium levels in the blood and help prevent painful kidney stones. • Take regular, small sips every 10-15 minutes. • Try flavoured drinks, like herbal teas or fruit-infused water. Ice chips or popsicles are a good way to increase fluid intake subtly. <p><i>Note: If there are heart or kidney concerns, make sure to ask about any restrictions.</i></p>	 <p><i>"It's important to try and drink fluids to stay hydrated. It will lower the calcium level in your blood and help you to feel better."</i></p>
<p>Short walks or easy exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If possible, take short walks or try simple exercises in bed. • Simple weight-bearing exercises (provided by the healthcare team) can be done to help prevent bone fractures. <p><i>Note: Hypercalcemia can cause confusion and muscle weakness. Make sure the living space is free of obstacles to reduce the risk of falls.</i></p>	 <p><i>"Let's try some easy exercises or a short walk. This will help you feel better."</i></p> <p><i>"Let's do a little bit of activity at a time. This will help make you and your bones stronger."</i></p>
<p>Medications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medications can help with pain, constipation or nausea. The nurse will explain how and when to give these. • Watch for any side effects from medications and share any concerns with the healthcare team. 	 <p><i>"This medication will help you. The nurse has shown me how to administer it."</i></p> <p><i>"Tell me how you are feeling..."</i></p>
<p>Stay calm and provide comfort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help manage symptoms by offering cold compresses for nausea, massaging aching muscles, or providing a calm soothing environment. 	 <p><i>"I'm here with you" or "I'll be right here when you need me."</i></p> <p><i>"We are taking care of you."</i></p> <p><i>"I am going to keep you comfortable."</i></p>
<p>Be aware of the signs and symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the healthcare team if you notice any signs and symptoms. They may arrange further tests if they feel they can make the patient more comfortable and prevent further physical problems. 	 <p><i>"I have contacted our healthcare team. They are ready to help us."</i></p>

IF:

- ✓ you feel overwhelmed and need help.
- ✓ you feel your loved one is not feeling better after trying different strategies.
- ✓ you are worried about symptoms of hypercalcemia.
- ✓ you have questions about what to do.



Call your Healthcare Team

Day time: _____

Evening: _____

Night time: _____

5 things you should know about Hypercalcemia



1 What is Hypercalcemia (imbalance of calcium)?

Hypercalcemia means there is too much calcium in the blood.

2 What causes an imbalance of calcium?

A calcium balance issue can happen when the body either puts too much calcium into the blood, doesn't remove enough of it through the kidneys, or doesn't store enough in the bones.

Some types of cancers can cause this imbalance because they produce a substance (PTHrP) that speeds up bone breakdown or tumours may grow into bones, causing them to release calcium.

3 What signs should I look for?

The signs that calcium is not in balance include:

- Feeling more tired than usual.
- Feelings of nausea, maybe even throwing up, and constipation.
- Feeling thirstier and going to the bathroom more often.
- Moments of confusion or not being able to concentrate.
- Muscles might feel weaker, making it harder to move around.
- Unusual or lasting pain in the bones.

4 How can we treat an imbalance of calcium in the blood?

A blood test will show if there is an imbalance of calcium in the blood. Medications help keep calcium in the bones or help remove it from the bloodstream and simple actions such as drinking and moving can also help.

If death is near, you may decide not to have any active treatments. There are several things that can be done that can help make the individual more comfortable and help with any pain or other symptoms.

5 When should I call the healthcare team?

When helping someone with hypercalcemia watch for these symptoms and situations and immediately communicate them to the healthcare team:

- **Thinking changes:** If the person seems more confused or forgetful than usual.
- **Muscle issues:** If they feel weaker, or if their muscles twitch or cramp.
- **Heart problems:** Any chest pain, or if the heart feels too fast or too slow.
- **Stomach issues:** Bad constipation, feeling very nauseous, or throwing up.
- **Bathroom changes:** If they're going to the bathroom a lot, drinking more water than usual, or not peeing much.
- **Bone pain:** If they complain about their bones hurting more than before.
- **Medication worries:** Bad reactions to their medicines or confusion about when to give them.
- **Feeling too tired:** If they suddenly feel way more tired or lazy than usual.
- **Drinking/eating issues:** If they're not drinking enough.
- **Issues after treatment:** If they feel worse or different after a treatment for high calcium levels.
- **Returning symptoms:** If they seemed better, but now the signs of high calcium come back or get stronger.