## National Comprehensive Cancer Network\*

# Understanding Immunotherapy Side Effects

Immune checkpoint inhibitors (a type of immunotherapy) offer a promising new way to treat cancer for some patients. But these medicines can cause your immune system to attack normal organs and tissues in your body, affecting the way they work. Serious side effects typically occur in less than 5% of patients, but certain mild side effects can occur in up to 30% – 50% of patients.

Contact your health care professional right away if you think you may be experiencing ...

### Pituitary gland inflammation

Low cortisol causing fatigue, loss of appetite, muscle weakness

#### **Eye problems**

Blurred or distorted vision, blind spots, eye pain or redness, itchy or bulging eyes, new floaters

## Thyroid gland inflammation

Weight loss or gain, rapid heartbeat, fatigue, sweating, anxiety, constipation, dry skin, sensitivity to cold

#### Inflamed lungs

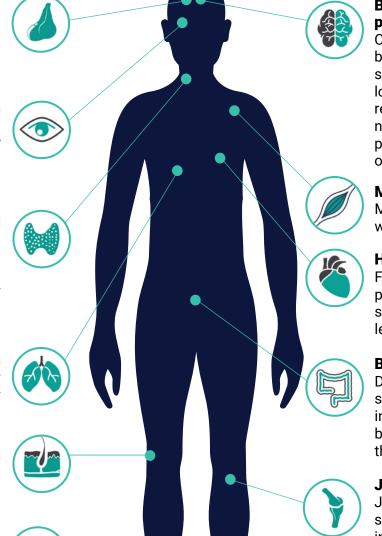
Shortness of breath, dry cough, chest pain, fever

#### Skin problems

Rash, itching, blistering

#### Nerve problems

Numbness or tingling in hands or feet; unusual weakness in legs, arms, or face



## Brain or spinal cord problems

Confusion, changes in behavior, headaches, seizures, short-term memory loss, problems speaking or reacting, sensitivity to light, neck stiffness, sensory problems, pain, fever, nausea or vomiting

#### **Muscle problems**

Muscle aches, pain, weakness, or stiffness

#### **Heart problems**

Fatigue, chest pain or pressure, irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, swollen legs, ankles, or feet

#### **Bowel problems**

Diarrhea, cramping, urgency, stomach-area pain, mucus in the stool, fever, nighttime bowel movements, blood in the stool (if severe)

#### Joint problems

Joint or tendon pain and swelling, stiffness after rest, improvement with heat

For other signs and symptoms that may occur with immunotherapy, please see the <u>NCCN Guidelines for Patients:</u> <u>Immunotherapy Side Effects – Immune Checkpoint Inhibitors.</u>



- Immune checkpoint inhibitors are a type of cancer medicine called immunotherapy.
- These medicines are designed to work with your immune system to treat certain types of cancer.
- Immunotherapy works differently than traditional chemotherapy and can cause different kinds of side effects.
- It is important to be aware of possible side effects and contact your health care professional right away if you experience any problems.



Atezolizumab (Tecentriq®)

Avelumab (Bavencio®)

Cemiplimab (Libtayo®)

Dostarlimab-gxly (Jemperli®)

Durvalumab (Imfinzi®)

Ipilimumab (Yervoy®)

Nivolumab (Opdivo®)

Pembrolizumab (Keytruda®)



## Did you know?

- No matter where your cancer began, side effects from immunotherapy can affect your whole body.
- Side effects may appear shortly after beginning treatment, within the first couple of months, or even after you finish treatment.
- Because many of these side effects can occur from other causes that would be treated differently, make sure your doctor knows you are or were on immunotherapy.
- You may be more likely to experience side effects if you are taking more than one kind of immunotherapy or immunotherapy combined with other types of cancer medicines.
- Many of these immune side effects are treatable. Your doctor may prescribe corticosteroids or other medications to help manage any problems.
- Rare but serious side effects can lead to death, especially if left untreated.

This information does not replace the expertise and clinical judgment of the clinician. If you think you are experiencing these symptoms, call your doctor today.

NCCN Guidelines for Patients® Immunotherapy Side Effects series

Available at NCCN.org/patientguidelines



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