

# 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 occasionally 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 . . .

## Brain inflammation (encephalitis)

Fever; confusion; changes in mood or behavior; neck stiffness; seizures; extreme sensitivity to light.

## Hormone gland problems (especially the thyroid, pituitary, adrenal glands, pancreas)

Persistent or unusual headaches; extreme tiredness; weight loss or gain; rapid heartbeat; increased sweating; hair loss; constipation; dizziness or fainting.

## Kidney problems

Decrease in the amount of urine; blood in the urine.

## Skin problems

Rashes; itching; blistering; painful sores or ulcers.

## Joint or muscle problems

Severe or persistent muscle or joint pain; severe muscle weakness.

## Eye problems

Blurry or double vision or other vision problems; eye pain or redness.

## Lung problems (pneumonitis)

New or worsening cough; shortness of breath.

## Liver problems (hepatitis)

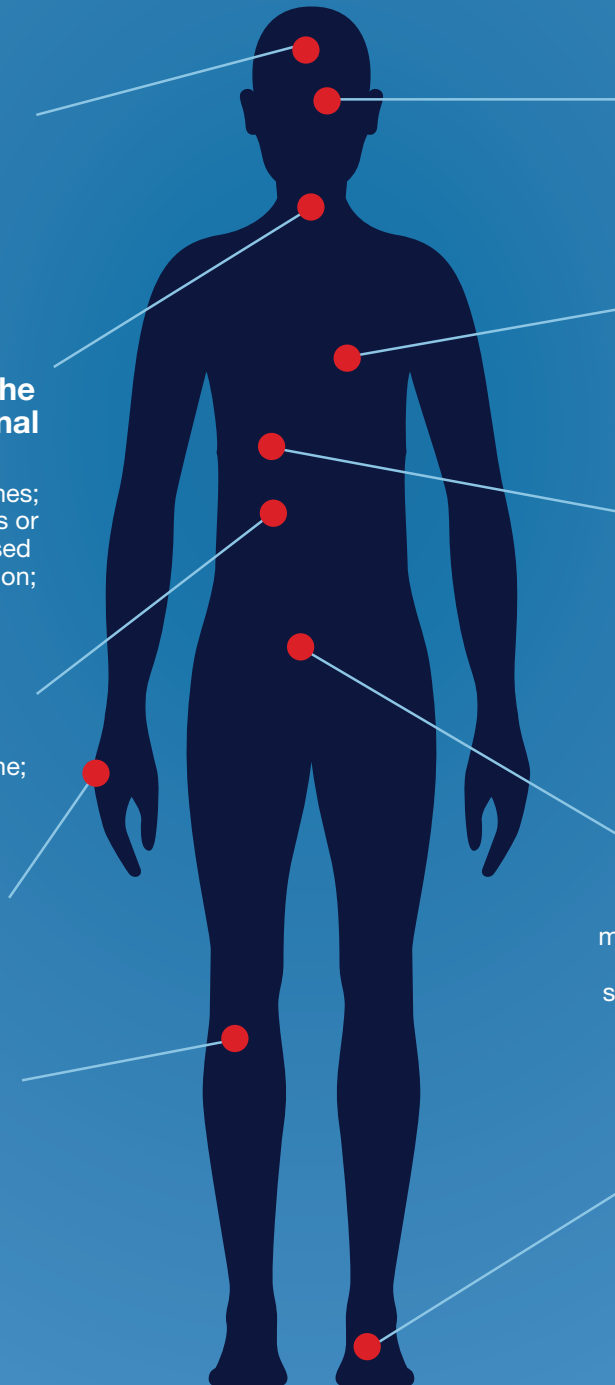
Yellowing of the skin or the whites of the eyes; severe nausea or vomiting; pain on the right side of the stomach area; dark urine; bleeding or bruising more easily than normal.

## Intestinal problems (colitis)

Diarrhea or more bowel movements than usual; stools that have blood or are dark, tarry, or sticky; severe stomach-area pain.

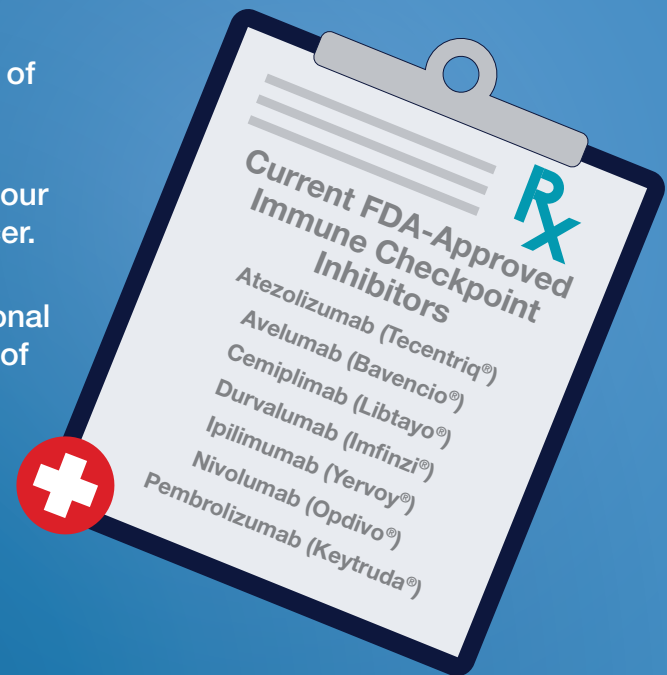
## Nerve problems

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



# WHAT IS IMMUNOTHERAPY?

- ✓ Immune checkpoint inhibitors are a new 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.



## 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.**

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