**Email module 4.b**

CBT

+ Light

for Women

with Breast Cancer

This email module includes some techniques for coping with

symptoms of pain and physical discomfort that often occur

during breast cancer treatment.

**Managing cancer treatment side effects**

**Last week you learnt about how to sleep with pain and physical discomfort. The following cancer related experiences and symptoms are often associated with pain or discomfort – here are some more tips to reduce the negative impact of these experiences. Practicing the techniques that you learnt last week will be helpful to manage these difficult sensations and achieve sleep where possible.**

**Hospitalisations**

(especially when confined to bed) – Try to engage in as much cognitive and physical stimulation as possible throughout the day. Reduce this in the 90 minutes prior to your usual sleep time. Consider using ear plugs or eye-masks to help sleep. Practice focusing on the breath and achieving a quiet mind before bed.

**Nausea / Vomiting**

Engage in distracting mental activities. Relaxation can also reduce nausea.

**Hot flushes / night sweats**

Hot flushes and night sweats are one of the most common side-effects of cancer or cancer treatments. They cause frequent night-time awakenings and poor sleep. Tips to manage these at night include wearing cotton (to allow your skin to breath), wearing layered night clothes (to quickly cool down or warm up) and having spare clothes within easy reach (if you need to change). Have layers of sheets/blankets that can be easily adjusted to suit changes in body temperature. Adjust your bedroom temperature to suit.

Keep the following near your bed to help cool down –

* a cool drink
* a water spray
* a hand-held or electric fan
* an ice-pack
* a small bucket of water and flannel to place against your face /body

Various medications can help with hot flushes too. Seek medical advice to discuss these options further. If hot flushes/night sweats are due to menopause, menopausal symptoms may be reduced by minimising stress, maintaining ideal weight, exercising and stopping smoking.

**Urinary changes (frequency, urgency, incontinence, trouble passing urine, and hesitancy)**

Urinary changes are common in cancer and cancer treatments. Problems can include incontinence, frequent need to urinate, sudden need to urinate, trouble passing urine, or trouble getting started (urinary hesitancy). These problems can lead to frequent night-time awakenings and extended periods awake.

* Speak to a professional about pelvic floor exercises to help with incontinence
* Have a urine bottle/bedpan in your room to avoid the need to get out of bed
* Keep warm nightgown / slippers near your bed for easy trips to the bathroom
* Wear easy to remove clothes (helpful for urinary urgency).
* Quit smoking and speak to your doctor about medications (for incontinence)

**Dry mouth** – keep water by your bedside within easy reach. Use a water spray to wet your mouth.

**Reminders:**

30 minutes of **Bright light each morning** and **dim light in the evening** keep your clock tuned.

Bright light during the day helps chase away sleepiness and fatigue.

The way you think about pain/ discomfort changes how much pain you feel. Instead of focusing on how ‘terrible’ you feel, see it as a ‘sensation’ that comes and goes.

Instead of pushing away or struggling with the sensation, practice being patient and willing to accept it.

Breath through it: try breathing into places of discomfort and pain. As you breath, let go of tension around that area.

When you feel pain/discomfort, don’t stop doing everything. Focusing on something else (e.g., what you enjoy) can make pain/discomfort feel less overwhelming.