

A guide for parents and family members
about talking to children of any age

**WE ARE
MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**



**TALKING TO
CHILDREN
AND TEENAGERS
WHEN AN
ADULT HAS
CANCER**



'Telling Grace was one of the worst things I had to do – how do you explain cancer to an eight-year-old?'

I think she was glad we told her, as I'm sure children pick up on all the hushed voices and often think it's worse than it is.'

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About this booklet

This booklet aims to help you talk to children of any age, including teenagers, about cancer. It addresses parents with cancer, but it can also be used by partners, grandparents and close family members.

It gives suggestions about how to:

- tell a child or teenager you have cancer
- understand their reactions
- help them cope
- explain cancer treatments
- deal with changes to your family life.

Talking to children and teenagers about cancer is a hard thing to do. Being honest and including them in what's happening is usually the best approach. When the time comes, many parents find the conversation more natural and less traumatic than they expected.

Most of the information in this booklet is relevant to teenagers as well as children. However, we've highlighted information that's particularly relevant to teenagers in panels like this one.

In this booklet we've included comments from people about how they talked to their children or grandchildren about cancer, which you may find helpful. Some are from members of our online community ([macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)). Others are taken from Healthtalkonline ([healthtalkonline.org](https://www.healthtalkonline.org)).

If you'd like to discuss this information, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, Monday–Friday, 9am–8pm. If you're hard of hearing you can use textphone 0808 808 0121, or Text Relay. For non-English speakers, interpreters are available. Alternatively, visit [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)

Turn to pages 54–63 for some useful addresses, helpful books and websites, and page 64 to write down questions for your doctor or nurse.

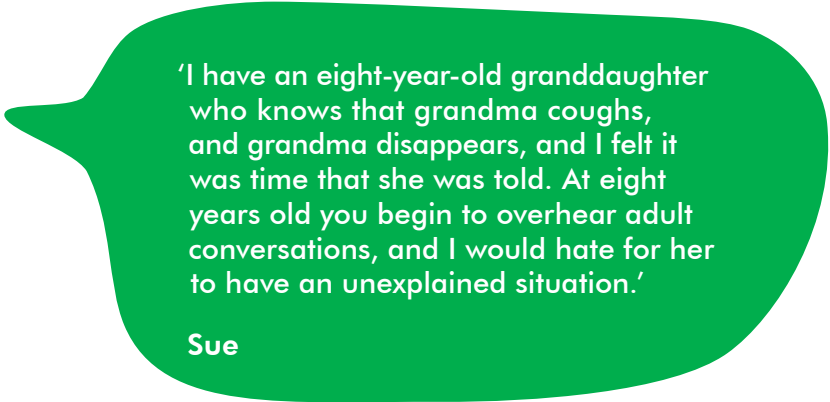
If you find this booklet helpful, you could pass it on to your family and friends. They may also want information to help them support you.

Why tell children?

Parents sometimes feel that by not telling a child or young person about a cancer diagnosis, they're protecting them.

Trying to protect children from difficult news, worry and distress is natural. But not explaining what's happening may make them feel more vulnerable, as it doesn't give them the chance to talk openly about their fears and worries.

Children know when something serious is affecting the family. They'll notice unusual comings and goings, phone calls and hushed conversations. They'll pick up on changes in how you and other adults around them are feeling and behaving.



'I have an eight-year-old granddaughter who knows that grandma coughs, and grandma disappears, and I felt it was time that she was told. At eight years old you begin to overhear adult conversations, and I would hate for her to have an unexplained situation.'

Sue

Understandably, you may have concerns that delay or stop you explaining what's happening. You may feel it will bring home the reality of the situation when you're still struggling to come to terms with it yourself. The thought of coping with a child's distress on top of everything else may seem overwhelming. Or you may worry that family life will be disrupted and that cancer will become the focus instead of things like school and exams.

The benefits of talking

There are many benefits to being open and involving children and teenagers:

- Knowing what's going on will make them feel more secure and less anxious.
- It gives them permission to talk – they can ask questions and say how they feel.
- It shows you trust them and you don't feel like you need to guard what you say all the time.
- It can make you all feel closer – your children can help support you, and you can help support them.
- They will learn how to cope when life isn't going to plan.

The effects of not talking

Wanting to protect children from difficult news is natural. But if you don't talk to them, they may:

- feel frightened because they don't know what's going on
- feel alone with lots of worries and no one to talk to
- worry that something they've done or thought has caused the cancer
- think they're not important enough to be included
- imagine something worse than the reality

- think cancer is too terrible to be talked about
- misunderstand situations and get the wrong idea.

Children often find out about what's going on even when they haven't been told. Finding out like this can have a negative effect on their relationship with their parent(s). They may wonder if they can trust you or other adults to tell them about important things.

Children also pick up things from the television, internet and overheard conversations, but this information can sometimes be misguided and inaccurate. If you don't speak to them about what's really happening, they may continue to believe this information.

'When I was diagnosed, my son was five and daughter eight years old. My son would not talk about things, but demonstrated his fears by a change in his behaviour. My daughter was older, and wanted to talk about her fears. Both children needed to be reassured that this illness was not their fault.'

Swati

Telling your children

You'll probably need time to cope with your own feelings before talking to your children. But try to talk to them before they pick up on things and start to worry.

Be as prepared as you can, and make sure you have all the information you need first and that you understand it.

Who should tell them?

If you're a two-parent family, it's usually best to tell them along with the other parent – but this can depend on how you usually talk as a family. If you're a single parent you may feel able to, and want to, do it on your own. Or you could do it along with someone close who your child knows and trusts.

Even if you're not doing the telling, it's still a good idea to be there so you know what's been said. However, some parents do prefer to let their partner tell the children and not to be there themselves. You should do whatever feels right to you.

The right time and place

Choose a time and a place when your children are most likely to listen and feel at ease, and where you won't be interrupted. There may be places where you and your children feel more able to talk. Make sure it's somewhere they'll feel able to express their feelings.

If you have more than one child, it's best to tell them together if you can. This prevents them feeling like their siblings know more than them. If you're telling them separately, do it as close together as possible. Some children may wonder why they were told last.

Try to avoid only telling the older children, as this can place a burden on them.

'I found it quite easy to talk to my children about it, though I did make the mistake of not telling everybody everything right at the start, because I thought the youngest one was too young.'

Lucia

Avoid telling them before bed time, as they may not be able to sleep. If it's unavoidable, make them feel supported and answer any questions they have before they go to sleep.

How to tell them

As a parent, you're the expert when it comes to your child. You know how best to communicate with them, how they might react and what support they'll need.

If you want to, you can practise what you're going to say beforehand and anticipate some of the questions they may ask. But don't try too hard to have the perfect conversation. If you plan too much, a question from your child may throw you. Children can ask questions you weren't prepared for, and these may come hours or days later.

Choose a time when you're feeling fairly calm. See the first conversation as a starting point. It's the beginning of an ongoing process of gradually giving your children small, relevant chunks of information and reassurance. Allow the conversation to be directed by your children's reactions and the questions they ask. Listen and keep it as open as you can. Try asking questions that encourage them to express what they're thinking, rather than a one- or two-word reply.

Some examples of openers are:

- 'Tell me about ...'
- 'How can we ...?'
- 'What do you feel about ...?'

Be honest

It's best to be honest with children. If they think you're being vague or hiding something, they'll find it hard to believe they're being told the truth. Don't make things sound less serious than they are. But, depending on your situation, you can be hopeful with them and let them know that although cancer is serious, many people get better. Tell them that you and your doctors are doing everything possible to get you well again.

It's fine to say you don't know if you don't have all the answers to their questions. Tell them you'll try to find out and will tell them when you know.

Teenagers may react differently from younger children or adults when they're told a parent has cancer. They may ask for more information about the diagnosis and what it means for family life, and they may need more time to work through their feelings.

As with younger children, teenagers will benefit from being told the truth about the cancer and your treatment plan. It's best to encourage them to ask any questions they have, and to answer these gently yet honestly. Remember that although teenagers value their independence, they'll still look to you for reassurance and support.



Making a start

You'll need to use words your children will understand. These will vary, depending on their ages (see pages 18–21). Here are some tips to help you through the conversation:

- Find out what they know and correct any misunderstandings.
- Use simple, straightforward language and short sentences to explain what's going on.
- Keep information relevant to the current situation rather than things that will happen in the future.
- Be as specific as you can – children worry more when things aren't clear.
- Ask them if there's anything else they want to know.
- Take it at the child's pace and be prepared for them to react in their own way.
- Repeat the information for younger children, especially those under seven, as they may not take it in or understand.
- Children also need to understand how their lives and routines are likely to be affected (see pages 26–28).

There are some useful books that help explain cancer to children (see pages 59–61). You may also be able to use our other information booklets about cancer types and treatments to help explain cancer to older children. To order any of our booklets, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**.

Explaining cancer

Children need some information about the name of the cancer, where it is in the body and how it'll be treated. Here are some examples of how you can explain cancer to young children:

- 'I have a lump growing inside my body (explain which part) that shouldn't be there. It's called cancer and I'm going to have an operation to take it away. After that, the doctor will give me medicine so that the lump doesn't come back.'
- 'I have an illness called cancer. The doctor is giving me medicine to help me get better. The medicine might make me feel sick or tired some days, but other days I'll feel fine.'
- If your child asks you what cancer is – 'Our bodies are made up of lots of tiny things called cells. They all have a different job to make our bodies work and keep us healthy. Cancer is when some cells in the body stop working properly and stop the healthy cells doing their jobs. The cancer cells can grow into a lump.'

Teenagers in particular may look for information about cancer on the internet. You or your doctor could help them understand whether the information they find is accurate and relevant to your diagnosis. They may find it helpful to visit the Macmillan website (macmillan.org.uk), Hope Support Services (hopesupportservices.org.uk) or Riprap (riprap.org.uk) – a website for teenagers who have a parent with cancer. There are many good sources of support online, some of which are listed on pages 61–63.

Important points to get across

Children, particularly those under 10 years old, often worry about things like causing the cancer or catching it. All children need reassurance that:

- nothing they did or thought caused the cancer
- cancer isn't like a cold and you can't catch it – it's okay to sit close, hug or kiss
- there will always be someone to take care of them
- they can always ask you questions and talk to you about how they feel
- you'll listen to their worries and try to help them cope.

'I made the decision to be honest and open with my children. I always promised I'd tell them the truth. It made it open for them to ask me anything that was worrying them – and they have.'

Louise

Who else needs to know?

You'll usually want to tell your close family and other adults who your children know and trust. Let them know what you've told your children – it's important that your children get the same message from everyone. Let your children know who you're going to tell and why.

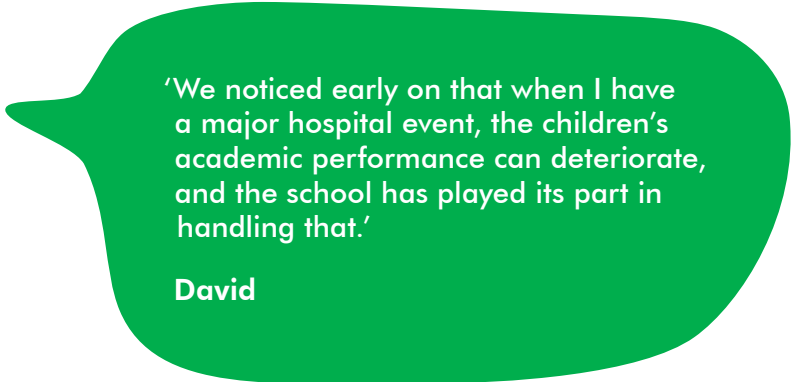
It's usually helpful to have a conversation with your children about who else needs to know, for example club leaders or their friends' parents. Older children may have strong feelings about who should and shouldn't know, so it's good to talk this over with them. Some teenagers don't want to be seen as different from their friends – but it's important that certain people know and can be there to support them if they need it.

Teenagers may be facing exams or coursework at school, college or university. If they're finding it difficult to keep up with their studies, it may be a good idea to speak with one of their teachers to find out whether any support is available.

You should speak to the teenager before doing this, as school or college may be one of the few places where things still feel 'normal', and they may be hesitant about letting people know. Asking them will also reaffirm their trust that you're telling them everything and including them.

It may be important to speak to their school or college about how they're coping. Teachers or staff can offer support, and they may notice issues or behaviours that aren't always apparent at home.

It's a good idea to let nursery/school teachers and the school nurse know. They can be sensitive to your child's needs, and it will help them understand any unusual or difficult behaviour. Ask them to let you know if your child shows any signs of worrying behaviour. You can ask them to support your child by giving them more one-to-one time, or you can involve the school nurse or counsellor.



'We noticed early on that when I have a major hospital event, the children's academic performance can deteriorate, and the school has played its part in handling that.'

David

Macmillan has a toolkit called *Talking about cancer*. It's aimed at helping teachers discuss cancer openly and honestly with 9–16-year-olds. The pack contains everything teachers need to give young people the facts about cancer. It includes lesson plans and DVD clips. The toolkit can be ordered from **macmillan.org.uk/teachingpack**

Children's understanding and reactions

Children's understanding and emotional reactions can depend on how old they are. They're usually able to understand more about illness as they get older, but this depends on the child – some younger children may understand things more easily than older children.

Babies and toddlers

Babies and toddlers won't understand what's happening. They'll be aware of changes to their routines, and especially changes to who's looking after them. Try to create an environment that's as familiar and consistent as possible, especially for when you're not there. If possible, choose someone to care for your child who knows them well and is able to look after babies/toddlers. Keep to familiar routines when you can.

Children aged 3–5

Young children don't really understand illness, but they pick up on tensions, changes in adults' emotions and physical changes. They react to changes in their routine and to being separated from you.

They may also believe that wishing or hoping can make things happen. They might feel guilty that they've done something to cause the cancer. Or if you're in hospital, they might worry that they've made you go away. Older children in this group are beginning to understand what illness is, and they may worry they'll get cancer too.

This age group can become clingy and scared of being separated from their parents. They may start to do things they've outgrown,

like thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, talking like a baby or having tantrums. They may become quieter than usual or have bad dreams.

How to help

- Use a doll, teddy or simple drawing to explain where the cancer is and/or where you'll have an operation.
- Ask someone they know and trust to take care of them.
- Keep to everyday routines when you can.
- Let them know that the cancer isn't their fault and they can't catch it.
- Set usual limits and boundaries, but don't be surprised if they start doing things they've outgrown.



Children aged 6–12

At this age, children can understand fuller explanations about the cancer and its effects on the body.

They often have fears they may not mention to you. This includes worrying you're going to die, that they've caused the cancer, or that they can catch it. They may try to be especially good, setting impossibly high standards for themselves. You may see changes in their behaviour, concentration, schoolwork or friendships.

How to help

The suggestions for children aged 3–5 still apply to many children in this age group. You may find the following tips helpful too.

- Use books to explain the cancer and its treatment.
- Reassure them that many people with cancer get better.
- Make sure they keep up with school, other activities and friendships.
- Let them know it's okay to enjoy themselves.
- Give them little things to do to help out.

Teenagers

Teenagers usually understand what's going on in terms of the cancer, but they can be reluctant to talk about it. They may find it hard to talk to you or show how they feel. It's important to encourage them to ask any questions they have and make sure they feel involved.

Teenagers may be keen to help out. But they may have to do more at home when they want to be more independent and spend less time in the house. This can make them feel angry and guilty at the same time. Sometimes their behaviour may seem hurtful to themselves or others.

How to help

- Tell them about useful sources of information. See pages 54–63 for information about organisations, books and websites, such as Riprap (riprap.org.uk) and Hope Support Services (hopesupport.org.uk).
- Ask them what they think and include them in the same way as you'd include an adult.
- Help them see that talking about feelings is a positive and mature way of coping. Encourage them to talk to someone close, such as their friends, a relative or a family friend.
- Make sure they keep up with friendships, activities and normal life as much as possible.
- Give them time and space to themselves when they want it.
- Keep to usual rules and limits – these can be even more important now than before.
- Explain that they might need to help out a bit more with things like cooking, tidying up or looking after younger siblings. But tell them that you'll let them know when they're doing enough.
- Show them you appreciate their help.

Allowing teenagers to help out shows them that you need and trust them. Talk to them about it first and don't allow them to take on too much responsibility.

When children need help

Children can have lots of different emotional reactions. They can show their feelings by being angry or by misbehaving. Your child may react to your illness with behaviour you wouldn't normally accept. Some children may have problems with eating, sleeping or bed-wetting, or problems at school. They may seem sad and withdrawn, or have physical symptoms like going off their food, headaches or tummy aches.

These changes aren't necessarily unusual but if they carry on or if there's anything worrying you about your child, you can ask for help.

People who can offer you and your child support are:

- your GP (family doctor)
- teachers
- the school nurse
- social workers
- psychological services at your hospital
- local counselling services.

Your cancer doctor or nurse will give you advice about counselling or psychological services to help you support your child.

You may be able to access help from social workers. In England, Scotland and Wales, social workers are accessed through your local authority (council). In these countries you can search for

contact details of your local council online at [gov.uk/find-your-local-council](https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council) In Northern Ireland social services are accessed through Health and Social Care Trusts – visit [nidirect.gov.uk](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

Teenage years are already a time of emotional ups and downs, but knowing that a family member has cancer can make things even harder.

Some teenagers may be less comfortable speaking about their emotions directly and prefer to express themselves through writing, art or music. Remember that if they aren't telling you how they feel, it doesn't necessarily mean they don't have anyone to speak to. They may well have the support of their friends and/or other adults, such as an uncle, aunt, grandparent or other relative. It's important to make sure they have someone to speak to outside of the family.

Teenagers may feel more comfortable joining a support group than speaking to a counsellor. They can also get online support. See the organisations and websites listed on pages 54–63 for more information.

Your feelings

You and your children are unique. How you all respond to the situation will depend on different factors, including the way your family normally deals with feelings.

Some parents worry about showing their feelings or crying in front of their children. However, there are good reasons to show how you feel. Hiding or bottling up your feelings also takes up energy and can make you feel even more anxious. You can read more about this in our booklet *How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer*. Showing your feelings can make it easier for your child to show theirs – it's like giving them permission to do the same.

Showing your feelings

The way children cope is often closely linked to how their parents cope. Children may need to be shielded from strong outbursts of emotion, such as arguments and rows between adults. But it's okay to cry in front of them sometimes, or to tell them you're fed-up or angry about your illness.

Let them know that crying helps you feel better and there may be times when they'll need to do the same. They shouldn't think crying is babyish or that they have to be strong. Explain that feelings like sadness and anger are normal and it's okay to show these. This helps your children accept these feelings as normal, rather than be frightened of them or feel that it's wrong to have them.

Always let your children know how much you love them through words, hugs and kisses. Sometimes your children may feel resentful about not getting enough of your attention. Or you may feel irritated by them or lose your temper. Don't be hard on yourself. The demands of children can be difficult to manage at the best of times. Your reactions may be quite normal or heightened because you're under a lot of stress.

Talk this over with your partner or family to try to make sure you're getting enough support and time out to help you cope. This can stop things at home becoming too tense.



Changes to family life

It can help if you try to keep family life as normal and as stable as possible for the children. This isn't easy, but there are things you can do that may make it easier.

Changes in routines

Disruptions and changes in routine are to be expected, but it's important your children know how their day-to-day routines are going to be affected. Children, especially younger ones, like and depend on routine – it helps them feel safe. Tell them about changes in advance and make sure they always know:

- who's looking after them when you're not there
- who'll pick them up from college, school or nursery
- who's taking them to activities such as swimming lessons
- any other changes to their normal routine.

Sometimes, even with planning, arrangements have to change at short notice. Try to show your children that things can also be flexible, and involve them as much as you can in any new plans.

'I wanted them to share in what the family was going through – I thought that was very important. And it meant that they were involved in all the visits that we suddenly had from different people, and I didn't have to pretend.'

Yvonne

Teenagers are often keen to help out when someone in their family is ill. This could mean anything from doing the washing-up to accompanying the person to appointments.

Allowing teenagers to help in these ways can have many benefits, both for you and for them. They may learn new skills and feel more mature. At the same time, it's important to make sure they don't try to take on too much. Let them know that while you might need their help, they should also carry on focusing on their schoolwork and doing things they enjoy, such as seeing their friends.

In some families, teenagers won't need to do any more than they usually would. In others, they may have more responsibilities to take on. Some teenagers become carers when a family member has cancer. A carer is someone who provides unpaid support to a family member or friend who could not manage without this help. Macmillan has a booklet for young carers aged 12–18 called *Let's talk about you*.

Have family time

Life can often be busy when you're coping with cancer, so it's important to have some uninterrupted time with your family.

If possible, ask people to contact you by text or email rather than by phone. People often want to help or let you know they're thinking of you, but they don't usually expect you to reply, so don't feel you have to. You could also switch your phone off at mealtimes.

On pages 37–38 we've listed some ways you can spend time with your family at home, even when you don't have much energy.

Getting help

Ask people to look after your children or take over some of the things you usually do. Choose people who your children feel safe, comfortable and familiar with. Younger children need consistency, so if possible it's a good idea to have the same person helping.

- Don't be reluctant to accept offers of help, especially when it frees you up to spend time with your children.
- Other parents are often willing to lend a hand by helping out with the children after school or nursery.
- Ask a relative or close friend to coordinate the help that's been offered. A rota system can often be worked out, and you can use a calendar or chart to keep track of who's helping when.
- Get extra help if you need it. We have more information in our fact sheet *Childcare when a parent has cancer* (visit [macmillan.org.uk/childcare](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/childcare)).

Keeping to the usual limits

Even when family life is going well, it's often hard to be consistent and to set rules and limits for your children. It's especially hard when you're coping with cancer and worried about your children's reactions to your illness. Children and teenagers need love and support, but they also need the usual discipline to help them to feel secure. It's important to try to keep to your usual family rules. If you're worried about your child's behaviour and need support, help is available (see pages 22–23).

Explaining treatment

This section is about the cancer treatments you may have, and how to talk about these with children and teenagers. Knowing about your treatment and its side effects can prepare children for what to expect and help them feel less anxious. What they'll need to know will depend on their age (see pages 18–21).

If you're struggling to take it all in yourself, it may help to talk to our cancer support specialists first. You can contact them by calling **0808 808 00 00**. They can send you booklets about your type of cancer or treatment, which may help you explain treatments to your children.

Surgery

Explain that this is an operation and the doctor/surgeon will:

- cut out the cancer, or
- remove the part of the body where the cancer is.

Before your children visit you in hospital, prepare them for how you'll be after the operation. For example, if you'll have drips or tubes, tell them what they're for and explain that you'll only have them for a short time to help you get better.

If children want to look at a scar, it's usually fine to let them see it, but it may be best to wait until the swelling and redness settle down. If they're not interested or seem reluctant to look, don't push them.

Chemotherapy

Explain to them that chemotherapy is:

- special medicine that destroys the cancer, or
- special medicine that stops or slows down the growth of cancer cells.

It's also helpful to tell children how the chemotherapy may change your routine and how it may make you feel. Let them know that:

- chemotherapy can sometimes make you feel sick, but that you'll take other medicine to stop the sickness
- chemotherapy can make you feel very tired, so you'll usually need to get lots of rest or sleep after having it
- your hair may fall out, and if it does, you'll be able to wear a wig, bandana or hat – you can reassure them that your hair will grow back again after the chemotherapy finishes.
- germs don't cause cancer but chemotherapy can make it easier for you to catch a cold or infection.

Radiotherapy

Explain to them that radiotherapy is:

- the use of x-rays or a laser beam to destroy the cancer, or
- strong x-rays given to the part of the body where the cancer is to destroy the cancer cells so they can't grow.

Depending on where you're having the radiotherapy, you can explain that:

- it can make the skin in the area being treated a bit red and sore
- it makes you feel very tired, even after it's finished, so you'll need to rest a lot.

Side effects

Children need to know that side effects will usually go away when your treatment is finished, but that this is often gradual. They should also know that side effects don't mean you're getting sicker and that not everyone gets the same side effects. Some children may worry that the cancer is getting worse if they see you unwell, or they may think that the treatment isn't working if you don't get side effects.

Tell your children that treatment can be hard and it's normal for you to feel down or frustrated at times, but it's not because of anything they've done. Help them feel involved by asking them to get you a drink or to do little things to help around the house.

Changes in physical appearance

Children usually cope and adjust well if they're told about any changes in your appearance in advance. Younger children, particularly those under 10 years old, struggle most with this. Letting them know in a matter-of-fact way is often the easiest way to explain things. Older children may feel embarrassed and want to avoid talking about it. If you're struggling to cope with it yourself, you may prefer someone else to explain it to them or to get further help (see pages 22–23).

After treatment

After treatment, your children may expect things to get back to normal and find it difficult to understand why that's not always simple.

You'll probably feel very tired and may still be coping with side effects. It's also not uncommon to feel anxious and isolated, and to miss the support you had during treatment. This is normal and it takes time for everyone to adjust to life after treatment. We have a booklet called *Life after cancer treatment* – we can send it to you or you can see it online at macmillan.org.uk

It's a good idea to prepare your children for the fact that it's going to take time, possibly months, to get your energy back. Be positive about the things you can do now treatment is over. Tell them about new changes to family life and routines – for example, if you'll be picking them up from school or if you won't be going back to work for a few months.

'It was really helpful to have play dates and weekends organised for my son. I am indebted to a couple of mums in my village who have regularly had my son to play with their kids so he comes home happy and tired.'

Anne-Marie



Tell them that you're still getting support from the hospital, from a support group or online. Get them involved in things you're doing to help your recovery, such as:

- taking some exercise like short walks to help to build up your energy levels
- eating well – tell them about foods that are healthy to eat and encourage them to try them
- making sure you all get enough sleep – explain how important this is for your recovery and for their growth
- asking them to carry on helping around the house.

Keep being open with your children. Let them know you're still there to listen to them and that they can talk to you about their worries. They may be worrying about you staying well, and younger children will probably still be clingy. Explain that you'll be going to the hospital for check-ups to make sure you're well. They'll need to know that you can still get everyday illnesses like colds, but that this doesn't mean the cancer has come back.

Acknowledge that you've all been through something difficult together and how they've helped you to get better. This can be particularly important for teenagers. Things usually gradually get back to normal as everyday life takes over from the cancer.

Despite all the difficulties, cancer may bring some positive things to your family life. Being open and honest with your children can make you feel closer. You can feel proud of how your children have learned to cope when life doesn't go to plan. And don't be afraid to say how proud you are of them. They may be more responsible, independent and more sensitive to other people's needs in the future.

Time together – in hospital and at home

You may:

- be having treatment as an outpatient
- need short stays in hospital
- be at home coping with side effects or symptoms.

All this can disrupt family life and make it difficult to have enough quality time with your children.

In hospital

You may be worried that seeing you in hospital will be too stressful for your children, but being separated from you may cause them more anxiety. Ask your children if they'd like to visit you and go with what they want.

At first it may be easier for them to see you in a visitor's/day room, or there may be a canteen or café you can take them to.

'I didn't want my son to see me in hospital with all the tubes in me. Somebody suggested I should get him to come along to the hospital with me when I was booking in and see me in my bed, so he'd know where I was when he didn't see me for the next few days.'

Barbara

You'll need to be aware of what your child may see in hospital, especially if there are very unwell people being cared for nearby. For younger children, keep visits fairly brief (up to 15 minutes) and remember that older children may want some time alone with you.

Here are some other ideas for how you can best prepare your children for a hospital visit:

- Make sure they're prepared for what they're likely to see and explain things to them. For example, tell them what a drip is, what it looks like and what it's for.
- Tell them about the different people who are there to help you. Show them things like the call button, so they feel more secure about you being looked after.
- Encourage older children and teenagers to take along a book, handheld games console or tablet computer. Encourage younger children to take a toy or colouring book.
- Make sure you've got snacks and things you can do together, such as a pack of cards or a book of word games.
- If they're overwhelmed or tired, ask the adult who's with them to take them home.

Keeping in touch with your children while you're in hospital is also important:

- Have a regular time to call home or when they can call or text you.
- Make sure they have a photo of you while you're away.

- Leave notes or a small gift for them to find when you're in hospital.
- If you have internet access in hospital, send them an email or speak with them over an online video chat service such as Skype (**skype.com**).
- Leave them a voicemail, or send a card or letter.
- Set up a website or blog that you can use to keep them updated.
- If they're younger, read a story with them over the phone or ask them to send you a drawing they've done.

Teenagers may want to come along to treatment sessions. You should encourage them to do this if they want to. It can help them understand the treatment process and ask any questions they have. It may be reassuring for them to have a better idea of how your treatment works.

At home

Here are some ideas for things you can do together when you want to spend time with your children, even if you don't have much energy.

- Watch TV or DVDs together.
- Play cards, board games or computer games.
- Listen to music together.

- Look through family photos and create a photo album together.
- Allow them to help out by bringing you a drink or a book, or by tidying up.
- On days when you're feeling better, save energy for the things you enjoy doing as a family. It doesn't have to be expensive or out of the ordinary. Your children will appreciate it that you're spending time with them.
- Getting out for some fresh air can be good for everyone. Exercise, even short walks in the park, can help increase your energy levels and reduce stress. It's great for your children and also helps them let off steam.
- Set aside some time for the children to show you what they've been doing at school or other activities they've been involved in.

These tips may be useful if your children are younger:

- Use art materials and things like Play-Doh® together. Drawing pictures about family life can help children express their feelings.
- Read and write stories together. Writing a story about you becoming ill can help your children express their feelings, and may reveal any misunderstandings they have.



If the cancer doesn't get better

This chapter is for anyone whose cancer is not expected to get better and who would like suggestions about how to tell a child or teenager. If your situation is different, you may prefer to continue reading from the next chapter on page 47.

Many people with cancer are cured or live with their cancer for many years. Even when a cancer is advanced, people may sometimes live with it for a long time.

If your cancer has come back or isn't getting better, your children will know and sense that things have changed. It's important to tell them what's going on.

It can be helpful to first ask the child what they understand about what's been happening. From this starting point, you can gently correct any misunderstandings and gradually tell them about the current situation.

Give them step-by-step information about what's happening. Tell them that the cancer has come back and you need more treatment to control it. Reassure them that you and your doctors will be doing everything possible to keep it under control. Try to be honest but still offer hope.

If treatment is no longer controlling the cancer, you'll need to tell them that you're going to get more poorly. Children also need to know that it's okay to talk about you not getting better. They might try to protect you by not talking, so it's important to let them know they don't have to do this. Children often have worries about who will care for them if you're no longer there. It can help to talk to them about this and reassure them that they'll always be cared for.

Talking about dying

The following section is for people with advanced cancer who only have a short time to live and want to prepare their children.

Preparing children for the loss of a parent is an incredibly hard thing to do. Some people may feel they know how best to do this for their own family. But you don't have to do it alone and it's not unusual to need a lot of support from family and close friends. Professionals such as social workers, palliative care nurses, doctors, counsellors and psychologists can also help you. You may find it useful to rehearse the words you plan to use with another adult.

Even when talking about dying, it's still best to talk openly and honestly with your children and to use straightforward language. Talking openly allows you to find ways of helping your children to cope in the future. It will also give you the opportunity to show how much you care for each other and allow you to sort out any issues you have.

Use straightforward language, which includes saying the words 'dying' or 'died', when you tell young children about death. Saying a parent is 'lost' or has 'passed away' can be confusing. They may wonder why no one is looking for the person who has died. Saying a person has 'gone away' may make a child feel that they've been abandoned. Try not to use 'going to sleep' to describe dying, because young children may then be afraid of going to sleep.

Young children often need to be reassured that they're not responsible for someone's death, as they can often find reasons to blame themselves.

It's difficult to describe to a child how someone will die, as no one can ever predict exactly when it will happen. Children need to have gradual explanations about what has happened and why, and what may happen next.

Older children may want to know more about what happens when someone is dying and need more information. We have a booklet called *Dying with cancer*, which you may find helpful.

A child's understanding of death generally depends on how old they are:

Very young children (aged under three)

Children under three can pick up that something very serious is happening. They don't understand that death is permanent and may confuse it with sleep. However, children as young as three can grieve.

Young children (aged 3–5)

Children aged 3–5 may have heard about dying but don't really understand what it means. They may imagine that a dead person will come back or is living somewhere else.

They often need to be reminded the person who has died will not come back again, but that they can still remember all the things they did together.

Older children (aged 6–12)

Children aged 6–12 know about death but, as with children of other ages, they may not always understand the emotions they feel. By about nine, children begin to understand death more like adults. Their worry is more likely to be that death is frightening or painful.

Teenagers often find it harder to cope than younger children with the news that someone is dying. They're old enough to know that this means a major change and loss in their life. They may cope in ways that are difficult for you to deal with, such as refusing to talk about the illness. Others may adapt and try to become closer to their parents.

Teenagers need to know that there's no right or wrong way to feel right now. They may get angry with you and then feel guilty about how they've acted, or feel bad about spending time with their friends.

It's important to make sure they get the support they need. Cruse Bereavement Care (see page 56) provides information about how teenagers understand death, and can offer support.



Questions children may ask

It may help to think about questions your children may ask in advance, and to think about how you want to respond. There isn't a right or wrong way. What's important is that your children feel able to ask questions and talk about how they feel.

'What will happen to me?'

'Daddy/Mummy/Granny/Grandad will still be here for you and will look after you. It's very important to me to make sure you'll be safe and looked after, so we've already talked about it.'

'Am I going to die too?'

'You can't catch cancer. Most people die when they're old and their bodies get worn out. It's very unusual and sad for someone young to be so ill that the doctors can't make them better.'

'Will other people
I love die too?'

'Daddy/Mummy/Granny/Grandad is well
and healthy at the moment and will be here
to look after you.'

'Is it my fault?'

'Nothing you did or said made me ill.'

Organisations such as Marie Curie Cancer Care (see page 55) provide information about supporting children and teenagers when an adult is dying. Cruse Bereavement Care has a special website for bereaved children and young people, and a free helpline on **0808 808 1677** (see RD4U on page 56).

Memory boxes

Some people want to help their children connect with memories of the things they've shared. You may like to make a memory box. This is a container that holds special things belonging to you, and can be a way of passing on memories to your children. It might include photos, some favourite music, letters or a message recorded on a DVD. Our fact sheet about memory boxes has more information – we can send you a copy. Alternatively you can read this information online – search for 'memory box' on the Macmillan website (macmillan.org.uk).



Looking after yourself

Whatever your situation, taking care of yourself and getting enough support will help you cope. This chapter gives some suggestions about how you can do this.

Getting enough rest is important, as your body uses up more energy than usual when you're coping with treatment and/or stress. Rest gives your body time to recover. Try to get enough sleep, and pace yourself so you don't overdo things.

Even if you don't feel like it, try to eat healthily if you can. This gives you more energy to feel better and improves your general health. Try to eat:

- plenty of fruit and vegetables
- more high-fibre foods
- more chicken and fish
- less red and processed meat
- less saturated fats (pastries, samosas, cakes, cheese, etc).

We have more detailed information about exercise and eating well after cancer treatment. Our cancer support specialists can send it to you, or you can see it online at [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)

It's good to be physically active as well. Even just short walks can sometimes help you feel less stressed and sleep better. It's great for the children as well.

Getting support

There's lots of support available to you and your family. It's important to ask for help or to talk to someone like your doctor if you feel you're not getting enough support.

Health professionals

If you're the person with cancer, your cancer specialist and your specialist nurse can offer support and advice. You can also talk to your GP if you need emotional support, whether you're the person with cancer or a relative. Occasionally some people may need more than advice and support from their health professionals, family and friends. Sometimes it's easier to talk to someone who's not directly involved. Your specialist or GP can usually refer you to a counsellor or psychologist who can help.

Our cancer support specialists on freephone **0808 808 00 00** can tell you more about counselling and can let you know about services in your area.

Social workers at the hospital may be able to help you find suitable childcare or help with finances if needed, as well as emotional support. We have a fact sheet about childcare that gives information about where you can get help.

Support groups

Self-help and support groups offer a chance to talk to other people who may be in a similar situation and facing the same challenges as you. Joining a group can be helpful if you live alone or don't feel able to talk about your feelings with people around you. Not everyone finds talking in a group easy, so it might not be for you. Try going along to see what the group is like before you decide.

You can call us on **0808 808 00 00** or visit **macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups** for information about cancer support groups across the UK.

Online support

Many people find support on the internet. There are online support groups, social networking sites, forums, chat rooms and blogs for people affected by cancer. You can use these to share your experiences, ask questions, and to get and give advice based on your experience. Our online community (**macmillan.org.uk/community**) is a social networking site where you can chat to people in our chat rooms, blog your journey, make friends and join support groups.

Other organisations and useful websites

You'll find information about different organisations and useful websites on pages 54–63.



How we can help you

Cancer is the toughest fight most of us will ever face. But you don't have to go through it alone. The Macmillan team is with you every step of the way.

Get in touch

Macmillan Cancer Support

89 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7UQ

Questions about cancer?

Call free on **0808 808 00 00**

(Mon–Fri, 9am–8pm)

www.macmillan.org.uk

Hard of hearing?

Use textphone 0808 808 0121
or Text Relay.

Non-English speaker?

Interpreters are available.

Clear, reliable information about cancer

We can help you by phone, email, via our website and publications or in person. And our information is free to everyone affected by cancer.

Macmillan Support Line

Our free, confidential phone line is open Monday–Friday, 9am–8pm. Our cancer support specialists provide clinical, financial, emotional and practical information and support to anyone affected by cancer. Call us on **0808 808 00 00** or email us via our website, **macmillan.org.uk/talktous**

Information centres

Our information and support centres are based in hospitals, libraries and mobile centres, and offer you the opportunity to speak with someone face-to-face. Find your nearest one at **macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres**

Publications

We provide expert, up-to-date information about different types of cancer, tests and treatments, and information about living with and after cancer. We can send you free booklets, leaflets, and fact sheets.

Other formats

We have a small range of information in other languages and formats. Our translations are for people who don't speak English and our Easy Read booklets are useful for anyone who can't read our information. We also produce a range of audiobooks. Find out more at [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/otherformats)

Please email us at cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk if you'd like us to produce our information for you in Braille or large print.

You can find all of our information, along with several videos, online at [macmillan.org.uk/cancerinformation](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancerinformation)

Review our information

Help us make our resources even better for people affected by cancer. Being one of our reviewers gives you the chance to comment on a variety of information including booklets, fact sheets, leaflets, videos, illustrations and website text.

If you'd like to hear more about becoming a reviewer, email reviewing@macmillan.org.uk

Need out-of-hours support?

You can find a lot of information on our website, [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)

For medical attention out of hours, please contact your GP for their out-of-hours service.

Someone to talk to

When you or someone you know has cancer, it can be difficult to talk about how you're feeling. You can call our cancer support specialists to talk about how you feel and what's worrying you.

We can also help you find support in your local area, so you can speak face-to-face with people who understand what you're going through.

Professional help

Our Macmillan nurses, doctors and other health and social care professionals offer expert treatment and care. They help individuals and families deal with cancer from diagnosis onwards, until they no longer need this help.

You can ask your GP, hospital consultant, district nurse or hospital ward sister if there are any Macmillan professionals available in your area, or call us.

Support for each other

No one knows more about the impact cancer has on a person's life than those who have been affected by it themselves. That's why we help to bring people with cancer and carers together in their communities and online.

Support groups

You can find out about support groups in your area by calling us or by visiting [macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport)

Online community

You can also share your experiences, ask questions, get and give support to others in our online community at [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)

Financial and work-related support

Having cancer can bring extra costs such as hospital parking, travel fares and higher heating bills. Some people may have to stop working.

If you've been affected in this way, we can help. Call the Macmillan Support Line and one of our cancer support specialists will tell you about the benefits and other financial help you may be entitled to.

We can also give you information about your rights at work as an employee and help you find further support.

Macmillan Grants

Money worries are the last thing you need when you have cancer. A Macmillan Grant is a one-off payment for people with cancer, to cover a variety of practical needs including heating bills, extra clothing, or a much needed break.

Find out more about the financial and work-related support we can offer at [macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport)

Learning about cancer

You may find it useful to learn more about cancer and how to manage the impact it can have on your life.

You can do this online on our Learn Zone – [macmillan.org.uk/learnzone](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/learnzone) – which offers a variety of e-learning courses and workshops. There's also a section dedicated to supporting people with cancer – ideal for people who want to learn more about what their relative or friend is going through.

Other useful organisations

General cancer support organisations

Cancer Black Care

79 Acton Lane,
London NW10 8UT
Tel 020 8961 4151

Email

info@cancerblackcare.org.uk

www.cancerblackcare.org.uk

org.uk

Offers information and support for people with cancer from ethnic communities, and their carers, families and friends.

Cancer Focus Northern Ireland

40–44 Eglantine Avenue,
Belfast BT9 6DX
Tel 0800 783 3339

(Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm)

Email

hello@cancerfocusni.org

www.cancerfocusni.org

Offers a variety of services to people affected by cancer, including a free helpline, counselling and links to local support groups.

Cancer Support Scotland

Calman Cancer Support Centre, 75 Shelley Road,
Glasgow G12 0ZE

Tel 0800 652 4531

Email

info@cancersupportscotland.org

www.cancersupportscotland.org

Runs cancer support groups throughout Scotland. Also offers free complementary therapies and counselling to anyone affected by cancer.

Irish Cancer Society

43–45 Northumberland Road,
Dublin 4, Ireland

Tel 1800 200 700

(Mon–Thu, 9am–7pm,
Fri, 9am–5pm)

Email

helpline@irishcancer.ie

www.cancer.ie

National cancer charity offering information, support and care to people affected by cancer. Has a helpline staffed by specialist cancer nurses.

Maggie's Centres

1st Floor, One Waterloo Street,
Glasgow G2 6AY

Tel 0300 123 1801

Email

enquiries@maggiescentres.org

www.maggiescentres.org

Maggie's Centres provide information about cancer, benefits advice, and emotional or psychological support.

Marie Curie Cancer Care

89 Albert Embankment,
London SE1 7TP

Tel 0800 716 146

Email info@mariecurie.org.uk

www.mariecurie.org.uk

Marie Curie nurses provide free end-of-life care to people with cancer in their own homes, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. There are also Marie Curie hospices across the UK.

Tenovus

Head Office,
Gleider House, Ty Glas Road,
Cardiff CF14 5BD

Tel 0808 808 1010

(Mon–Sun, 8am–8pm)

www.tenovus.org.uk

Aims to help everyone get equal access to cancer treatment and support. Funds research and provides support such as mobile cancer support units, a free helpline, an 'Ask the nurse' service on the website and benefits advice.

**Counselling,
bereavement and
emotional support****Barnardo's**

Tanners Lane, Barkingside,
Ilford, Essex IG6 1QG

Tel 020 8550 8822

www.barnados.org.uk

Produces resources that are specially designed to help children face family bereavement or separation, including booklets, a board game and memory books.

Childhood

Bereavement Network

8 Wakley Street,
London EC1V 7QE

Tel 020 7843 6309

Email cbn@ncb.org.uk

www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk

A national, multi-professional group of organisations and individuals working with bereaved children and young people. Has an online directory which you can search for local services.

Cruse Bereavement Care

PO Box 800, Richmond,
Surrey TW9 1RG

Tel 0844 477 9400

(Mon and Fri, 9.30am–5pm,
Tue–Thu, 9.30am–8pm)

Email helpline@cruse.org.uk

www.cruse.org.uk

Provides bereavement counselling, information and support to anyone who has been bereaved, including children and young people. Has a network of branches across the UK. Also runs the RD4U website (**rd4u.org.uk**) for young people, which includes information and forums where visitors can share their experiences.

Hope Support Services

Unit 8C, Alton Business Park,
Alton Road,

Ross on Wye HR9 5BP

Tel 01989 566317

Email help@hopesupportservices.org.uk

www.hopesupportservices.org.uk

Supports 11–25-year-olds when a family member is diagnosed with a life-threatening illness.

Samaritans

Chris, PO Box 9090,
Stirling FK8 2SA

Tel 08457 90 90 90

Email jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org.uk

Provides 24-hour confidential, non-judgemental and emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which could lead to suicide. Service provided by phone, email or letter.

Winston's Wish

3rd Floor, Cheltenham House,
Clarence Street,
Cheltenham GL50 3PR

Tel 08452 03 04 05

Email

info@winstonswish.org.uk

www.winstonswish.org.uk

Helps bereaved children and young people rebuild their lives after a family death. Offers practical support and guidance to families, professionals and anyone concerned about a grieving child.

Support for young carers

Include Programme at the Children's Society

Ground Floor, Unit 4,
Wessex Business Park,
Wessex Way SO21 1WP

Tel 01962 711511

Email

include@childrenssociety.org.uk

www.youngcarer.com

This programme provides information for young carers and those who support them across the UK. Find information about local young carers and projects in your area via the website.



You can search for more organisations on our website at macmillan.org.uk/organisations, or call us on 0808 808 00 00.



Further resources

Related Macmillan information

You may want to order some of the resources mentioned in this booklet. These include:

- *Dying with cancer*
- *How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer*
- *Let's talk about you*
- *Life after cancer treatment*

To order a free resource, visit be.macmillan.org.uk or call **0808 808 00 00**.

All of our information is also available online at macmillan.org.uk/cancerinformation

Audio resources

Our high-quality audio materials, based on our variety of booklets, include information about cancer types, different treatments and about living with cancer.

To order your free CD, visit be.macmillan.org.uk or call **0808 808 00 00**.

Helpful books

A monster calls

Walker, 2012, £6.99

A story that uses humour and fantasy to show what it can feel like being a child with a mum who has cancer, and the effects it can have on daily life.

Artichoke hearts

Macmillan Children's Books, 2011, £5.99

A story written from the perspective of Mira, a 12-year-old girl whose grandmother Josie is dying of cancer.

Life on the refrigerator door

Macmillan Children's Books, 2008, £5.99

A story written as a series of notes left on a fridge door, by a mother going through breast cancer treatment and her teenage daughter.

Milly's bug-nut

Winston's Wish, 2002, £4.99

The story of a family finding their way through bereavement.

Milo and the restart button

Simon and Schuster,

2011, £5.99

A story written from the point of view of a bereaved child.

Mum has cancer

Cancer Link Aberdeen and North (CLAN), 2006, £5.00 (£6.00 including P&P)

A book about the impact a mother's cancer diagnosis can have on a young child's life. It's a starting point for discussion, giving the adult a way to ask about the child's own experience of a difficult situation.

Mummy's lump

Breast Cancer Care, 2008, free from **breastcancercare.org.uk/publications**

This booklet is aimed at children under six. It follows the story of Elly and Jack as they learn about their mother's diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer. Available in a read-along format for

iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch.

Also available in Welsh.

Stories about surviving cancer

Franklin Watts, 2010, £12.99

This book has 10 stories about young people who faced cancer and came out the other side, as either a patient or a family member of someone with cancer.

Talking with your children about breast cancer

Breast Cancer Care, 2007, free from **breastcancercare.org.uk/publications**

This booklet explains what children of different ages may understand about cancer and how they may respond to news that someone in the family has breast cancer. Has advice on what, when and how to tell children about the diagnosis.

The secret C: straight talking about cancer

Winston's Wish, 2009, £4.99

This booklet is aimed at parents or carers who are trying to tell a 7–10-year-old about cancer. It encourages open communication and questions about cancer within the family.

The text has simple messages for parents and carers to expand on.

What's up with Bridget's mum? Medikidz explain breast cancer
Medikidz, 2009, £8.99

What's up with Tiffany's dad? Medikidz explain melanoma
Medikidz, 2010, £8.99

Two in a series of comic books aiming to help children learn about health and disease in a non-threatening way.

When your parent has cancer: a guide for teens
National Cancer Institute (USA), 2012, free from **cancer.gov**

Information about what's helped teenagers get through this tough time. Includes illustrations and quotes.

Useful websites

A lot of information about cancer is available on the internet. Some websites are excellent; others have misleading or out-of-date information. The sites listed here are considered by doctors to contain accurate information and are regularly updated.

Macmillan Cancer Support www.macmillan.org.uk

Find out more about living with the practical, emotional and financial effects of cancer. Our website contains expert, accurate, up-to-date information on cancer and its treatments, including:

- all the information from our 150+ booklets and 360+ fact sheets
- videos featuring real-life stories from people affected by cancer and information from medical professionals
- how Macmillan can help, the services we offer and where to get support
- how to contact our cancer support specialists, including an email form for sending your questions
- local support groups search, links to other cancer organisations and a directory of information materials

- a huge online community of people affected by cancer sharing their experiences, advice and support.

American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

Nationwide community-based health organisation dedicated to eliminating cancer. It aims to do this through research, education and advocacy.

Cancer Research UK
www.cancerhelp.org.uk

Contains patient information on all types of cancer and has a clinical trials database.

Healthtalkonline and Youthhealthtalk
www.healthtalkonline.org
www.youthhealthtalk.org

Both websites contain information about some cancers and have video and audio clips of people talking about their experiences of cancer and its treatments.

Macmillan Cancer Voices
www.macmillan.org.uk/cancervoices

A UK-wide network that enables people who have or have had cancer, and those close to them such as family and carers, to speak out about their experience of cancer.

National Cancer Institute – National Institute of Health – USA
www.cancer.gov

Gives comprehensive information on cancer and treatments.

NHS Choices
www.nhs.uk

The country's biggest health website. Gives all the information you need to make decisions about your health.

NHS Direct Online
www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

NHS health information site for England.

NHS 24 in Scotland
www.nhs24.com

NHS health information site for Scotland.

NHS Direct Wales **www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk**

NHS health information site for Wales.

Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland **www.n-i.nhs.uk**

The official gateway to health and social care services in Northern Ireland.

Patient UK **www.patient.co.uk**

Provides information about health and disease. Includes evidence-based information leaflets on a wide variety of medical and health topics.

Websites for young people

Riprap **www.riprap.org.uk**

This website is for 12–16-year-olds who have a parent with cancer. Children and young adults can learn more about cancer and its treatment, read individual stories and share their experiences. Experienced cancer professionals answer emails sent to them through the site.

Siblinks **www.siblinks.org**

A website that provides support to young people aged 13–25 with a family member or friend affected by cancer. Has a forum where young people can meet and share their experiences with others.

YC Net **www.youngcarers.net**

A friendly and interactive website for young carers. Offers support, information and a place to share your experiences.

Disclaimer

We make every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate and up-to-date but it should not be relied upon as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. So far as is permitted by law, Macmillan does not accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this publication, or third-party information or websites included or referred to in it. Some photographs are of models.

Thanks

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Sources

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Can you do something to help?

We hope this booklet has been useful to you. It's just one of our many publications that are available free to anyone affected by cancer. They're produced by our cancer information specialists who, along with our nurses, benefits advisers, campaigners and volunteers, are part of the Macmillan team. When people are facing the toughest fight of their lives, we're there to support them every step of the way.

We want to make sure no one has to go through cancer alone, so we need more people to help us. When the time is right for you, here are some ways in which you can become a part of our team.



Share your cancer experience

Support people living with cancer by telling your story, online, in the media or face to face.

Campaign for change

We need your help to make sure everyone gets the right support. Take an action, big or small, for better cancer care.

Help someone in your community

A lift to an appointment. Help with the shopping. Or just a cup of tea and a chat. Could you lend a hand?

Raise money

Whatever you like doing you can raise money to help. Take part in one of our events or create your own.

Give money

Big or small, every penny helps. To make a one-off donation see over.

Call us to find out more

0300 1000 200

macmillan.org.uk/getinvolved

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More than one in three of us will get cancer. For most of us it will be the toughest fight we ever face. And the feelings of isolation and loneliness that so many people experience make it even harder. But you don't have to go through it alone. The Macmillan team is with you every step of the way.

We are the nurses and therapists helping you through treatment. The experts on the end of the phone. The advisers telling you which benefits you're entitled to. The volunteers giving you a hand with the everyday things. The campaigners improving cancer care. The community there for you online, any time. The supporters who make it all possible.

Together, we are all Macmillan Cancer Support.

For cancer support every step of the way, call Macmillan on 0808 808 00 00 (Mon–Fri, 9am–8pm) or visit macmillan.org.uk

Hard of hearing? Use textphone 0808 808 0121, or Text Relay.
Non-English speaker? Interpreters available.
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