

Your feelings after cancer treatment





“ Sometimes you feel you need to power on, and people think you are just going to bounce back. But it's alright to need help. Mentally you are still getting over it. ”

Sarah, left, diagnosed with thyroid cancer

About this booklet

This booklet is for anyone who has had cancer treatment. You may also find it helpful if you are still having treatment. It describes some of the feelings you may have and ways to cope with them.

How to use this booklet

This booklet is split into sections to help you find what you need. You do not have to read it from start to finish. You can use the contents list on page 3 to help you.

It is fine to skip parts of the booklet. You can always come back to them when you feel ready.

On pages 61 to 64, there are some useful addresses and websites.

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

Quotes

In this booklet, we have included quotes from people affected by cancer. Some are from our Online Community ([macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)). The others are from people who have chosen to share their story with us, including Sarah, who is on the cover of this booklet. To share your experience, visit [macmillan.org.uk/shareyourstory](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/shareyourstory)

For more information

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)

If you would prefer to speak to us in another language, interpreters are available. Please tell us, in English, the language you want to use.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call us using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app.

We have some information in different languages and formats, including audio, eBooks, easy read, Braille, large print and translations. To order these, visit [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/otherformats) or call **0808 808 00 00**.

Contents

Your feelings after treatment

5

Relationships and work

23

Ways to look after yourself

29

More support

45

Further information

55



**Waheed, diagnosed
with bone cancer**

YOUR FEELINGS AFTER TREATMENT

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| After treatment | 6 |
| Relief and hope | 7 |
| Uncertainty | 8 |
| Worry about cancer coming back | 10 |
| Feeling alone | 13 |
| Loss of confidence | 15 |
| Sadness and depression | 17 |
| Anger | 20 |
| Other feelings | 21 |

After treatment

When cancer treatment ends, you may have many different emotions. You may feel relieved that treatment is over. Or you may feel sad, angry or uncertain. This could be because:

- you have side effects or physical changes caused by the cancer or the treatment
- your role in your family, with friends or at work has changed
- you are seeing your cancer doctor less often
- your plans for the future have changed.

People often find their own ways of coping with their feelings after treatment. For many people, uncertainty becomes easier to manage with time. But others struggle with their feelings for a long time after treatment has ended. If you had low moods or depression before, these might be worse after treatment.

We have more information about how you can help yourself and where to get more support if you need it. You can also share your experiences and chat to other people affected by cancer on our Online Community (see page 59).

Relief and hope

When your main treatment is over, you may feel relieved. You do not have to visit the hospital as much. You can start to recover from the side effects of treatment. You may start to think about having a holiday, going back to work, or doing other things you used to do.

You might find your view on life has changed after treatment. You may have had time to think about your illness and what you have been through. This could be a positive step. You may feel you want to move on with a new life. Perhaps different things are important to you now. You may want to make changes at work or at home, try new things or set new goals.

'Others think that when we are free from cancer, everything should carry on as normal. We know different. We have to adapt to the new normal.'

Richard

Uncertainty

We all like to know what is going to happen to us. It helps us feel secure about the future. After treatment, you may feel that this has been taken away from you. Your future may feel uncertain, and this can be frightening.

You may find yourself asking some of these questions:

- What happens now?
- Will I ever get back to how I was before?
- Will I be able to go back to work?
- Will I be able to have children?
- Will the cancer come back and, if so, when?

Uncertainty can be stressful. You might find it difficult to make plans when you are not sure about the future.

Coping with uncertainty

If you are finding uncertainty hard to live with, try taking control of the things you can do something about. Getting back into a routine will help. Over time, you will be able to do more of your usual activities.

You might decide to make changes to your diet or other areas of your life. You may want to try complementary therapies to help you relax and cope with stress. You can order our booklets **Healthy eating and cancer** and **Cancer and complementary therapies** (see page 56).

You may find it helpful to know that other people have the same kinds of feelings as you. We have some videos on our website. Visit **[macmillan.org.uk/copingwithcancervideos](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/copingwithcancervideos)**

You can also visit the Online Community to talk to other people (see page 59).



Worry about cancer coming back

After treatment, many people worry about whether the cancer will come back. During treatment you know something is being done to stop or control the cancer. But when treatment ends, you may worry that there is nothing to stop the cancer coming back. You may also worry about any aches or pains.

For some people, there is only a small risk that the cancer will come back. Other people may be told that the cancer is likely to return. Your doctors may not give you a clear answer about the future, as they do not always know. Whatever your situation, it is normal to be worried about the cancer coming back.

These worries may come and go, or you may have them all the time. Sometimes these feelings can be difficult to cope with. You may find that you:

- cannot concentrate
- do not sleep well
- become irritable.

These feelings usually get easier as time goes by. You may find you start to think about the cancer less often. But there may be times when these feelings get worse again. This could be before a hospital appointment or if you have new symptoms.

We have a booklet called **Worrying about cancer coming back** that you may find useful (see page 56).

Situations that may worry you

You may find there are some situations that make you worry more. Sometimes you may feel worried, but not know exactly why. This can make it hard to talk about.

These situations vary. Everyone worries about different things. But some common worries are:

- hospital appointment or tests – you may worry you will get bad news or it may bring back memories of your diagnosis or treatment
- noticing a new or different ache, pain or other symptom
- reading or hearing about cancer in magazines, newspapers, films, TV programmes or online
- hearing someone else's cancer has come back or that they have died – this could be someone you knew or even a celebrity in the news.

Knowing what makes you worried can help. Worry and anxiety are common reactions, but there are helpful ways to manage these feelings. For example, try not to compare yourself with others. No two cancer experiences are the same, even if they are the same type of cancer.

A new symptom could be nothing to do with cancer. You may get the normal aches and pains everyone gets. Or they could be caused by treatment side effects. We have more information on symptoms or signs to be aware of. Always check any new symptoms with your GP, cancer doctor or specialist nurse. This can help with feelings of worry and anxiety.

Coping with fear and anxiety

If you find feelings of fear and anxiety difficult to cope with, you might want to get more support. This could be from your GP, specialist nurse, a counsellor or a psychologist.

If you have any unexplained symptoms, talk to your GP, cancer doctor or nurse. It may not be anything to do with the cancer, but it is best to get it checked out.



Feeling alone

People with cancer sometimes feel lonely and isolated. It is natural to feel like this at different times during your diagnosis and treatment. Sometimes you still feel like this after treatment finishes.

You may feel lonely even when you are with other people. It may seem like no one understands what you went through. You might feel you have to be brave. This could be because you do not want to upset your family and friends by talking about your feelings.

There can be many reasons why you might feel alone. You may miss the routine of treatment, or the relationships you had with hospital staff. If your appearance has changed, you may be less confident about going out. For example, this could be because of hair loss or changes to your weight. These changes can be difficult to cope with, even if they are not obvious to everyone.

Side effects such as tiredness may mean you do not go out as much as before. Your family and friends might not realise you feel lonely. Or they may think you want time to yourself.

If you are back at work, you may feel lonely if you or your colleagues are uncomfortable talking about cancer. We have more information about returning to work after treatment and talking to colleagues, which may help (see page 56).

Loneliness can be worse if you find it difficult to talk about your feelings. Sometimes it may feel easier to lie and tell people you are okay. You may find yourself giving people other reasons for not talking, such as 'I'm just feeling tired'.

Coping with loneliness

Talking to other people about your feelings can help you feel less alone. Talking to family, friends or a partner might reassure you. Or you might find it more useful to talk to someone in a similar situation to you. You can talk to other people going through the same thing on our Online Community (see page 59). You can share your own thoughts and feelings, and get support.

You may find joining a support group gives you a place to talk (see pages 58 to 59).

You can also call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**. Our cancer support specialists can answer your questions about cancer and your feelings. Or they can just listen.

'My Macmillan nurse Maggie was always there if I needed to talk and I felt I couldn't turn to my husband or friends. If there was anything I was worried about, whether it was the chemotherapy or the children, she was my go-to person.'

Waheed

Loss of confidence

Having cancer can make you feel less confident. You may feel you lost some of your independence during your treatment. Your role in your family or at work may have changed. These roles may be important to how you think about yourself. Your social life may have changed during and after treatment too. You may not be in contact with your friends as much as you were before treatment.

You may worry about what you are able to do and cope with. Or you may feel less comfortable or confident doing things that you found easy before.

Physical changes caused by treatment can also affect your confidence. We have more information about learning to cope with changes to your body in our booklet **Body image and cancer** (see page 56).

Coping with loss of confidence

Building your confidence takes time. You may find things improve as you start to recover from treatment. You may learn new ways of doing things for yourself again.

It is best to set yourself small goals that you know you can meet. Work towards larger goals by breaking them into smaller steps.

Perhaps your goal is to be able to enjoy a holiday, but the thought makes you anxious. Even one night away might be worrying. It might help to start by doing a day trip. Go somewhere that you know well and can travel to easily. You may decide to only stay for an hour or so. The important thing to remember is that this is a step in the right direction.

As you achieve each goal, your confidence will start to grow. Remember to notice every success, no matter how small it seems. You might want to celebrate or reward yourself somehow. This may be as simple as writing about it in a diary. Or you could do something you enjoy, such as going to the cinema or out for a meal.

Sadness and depression

People often have feelings of sadness or loss after treatment. You may feel sad about how things have changed, or about things you cannot do anymore. Your mood may be low at times because you are tired.

People may have told you to think positively during your treatment. You may hear this even more when your treatment has finished. Being positive does not mean you have to feel happy all the time. It is a positive thing to accept and talk about your feelings, even the difficult ones.

As you begin to recover and move on with your life, feelings of sadness and loss often improve. But for some people, the low mood continues or gets worse. It may become depression.

Symptoms of depression

Sometimes it is difficult to know if you are depressed or not. Symptoms of depression can include:

- feeling low in mood or sad most of the time
- losing interest in things you used to enjoy, like your hobbies or social life
- changes in sleeping, eating or concentration
- feeling helpless or vulnerable
- problems starting or finishing tasks.

Remember, it is normal to have these feelings sometimes. But if they go on for more than 2 weeks, talk to your doctor or nurse.

If you have any thoughts about self-harm or suicide, you should contact your cancer doctor, GP or specialist nurse straight away.

Coping with depression

It is important to remember that depression is common and that there are many things that can help. You may need help even after your cancer treatment finishes. There are many ways to cope and there are different types of support. What works for one person may not work as well for another.

Some people find that talking about their feelings can help. If you can, talk to your family, friends or partner about how you feel so they can support you. You can also try talking to someone who is going through similar experiences. This might be through a cancer support group or an online social networking site, such as our Online Community (see page 59).

If you think you need more support, talk to your GP, specialist nurse or another healthcare professional. They can listen to you or refer you to a counsellor or psychologist. They may also talk to you about medication that can help treat depression.

We have more information about depression and the types of professional help available. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/depression](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/depression) for more information about depression.

If you feel very low but cannot contact someone from your healthcare team, you can talk to the Samaritans. They have a 24-hour confidential helpline on **116 123** that you can call for support.

Anger

It is natural to feel angry when you have had cancer. You may feel angry about going through treatment and having to cope with the side effects. You may be angry if the cancer has caused you to make changes to your life. Cancer may affect your relationships, family life, work or social life.

We all show anger in different ways. Some people get impatient or shout. Others get upset and tearful. You may get angry with the people close to you. Anger can hide other feelings, such as being sad or scared.

Coping with anger

It is important not to hide your feelings if you are angry or upset. It may help to tell people that you are angry about your situation and not at them. Finding ways to help you relax and reduce stress can help with anger. We have more information about complementary therapies (see page 43).

Try not to feel guilty about your angry thoughts or irritable moods. Anger can be a strong emotion, and you may find you can use it in a more positive way. For example, it may:

- help you focus on what is important in your life
- give you the determination to start something new, like a hobby or challenge.

If you are angry most of the time or it is starting to affect your life, you may find it helpful to talk to a counsellor or psychologist.

Other feelings

We have talked about some of the feelings you may have, but you may experience other emotions too. There is no right or wrong way to feel. We have more information about the emotions you may have. We have a booklet called **How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer** which you may find helpful (see page 56). Or you could talk to one of our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**.

'I called the Macmillan Support Line. It was Jenny who I spoke to the most and she was lovely. Jenny helped me get through the emotions I was feeling and made me feel like I was sane. Because sometimes you feel like everything has spun out of control, which is horrible.'

Sarah



RELATIONSHIPS AND WORK

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Your feelings and relationships | 24 |
| Partners | 26 |
| Managing work | 27 |

Your feelings and relationships

Cancer and its treatment can cause many changes in your life. Your relationships with family, friends or partners might change too.

Some changes can be difficult to cope with. Cancer and its treatment can put a lot of strain on relationships. Even close families or couples who have been together for a long time can have problems. However, some changes will be positive. Going through an experience like cancer can make relationships stronger.

How a relationship changes can depend on:

- what the relationship was like before
- how treatment has changed your daily life
- each person's personality.

Every relationship is different. But if there is a problem, try talking about it. Be open and listen to the other person. People often want to support you, but are not sure how to. Try to help them understand what support you need.

Remember, your situation can have an emotional impact on the people close to you too. They may be struggling with their feelings and need to find their own way to cope.

Even after treatment, people may not understand what life is like for you. They may expect you to get back to normal straight away. They may not know how to support you, or even that you still need support.

There is support available for friends, family and partners. We have more information about talking with someone who has cancer and looking after someone with cancer. We also have more information about cancer and relationships. You can order our booklets **Talking with someone who has cancer**, **Looking after someone with cancer** and **Cancer and relationships: support for partners, families and friends** (see page 56).

There may also be support available in your local community. Some hospitals offer talking therapies to family members. Ask your healthcare team about this if you think it would help.

We have more information about local support groups. Or you could talk to one of our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00** or visit the Online Community (see page 59).

'Macmillan were like my guardians when my mum and dad weren't there to talk to. Even if it's late at night you can go on the Online Community and someone always responds.'

Sarah

Partners

Some couples find their relationship changes after cancer and its treatment. These changes may be practical, emotional or physical.

- Practical – your roles and responsibilities at home and work may be different now. For example, you may have new ways of managing housework, childcare or finances.
- Emotional – your feelings about each other may change. Your relationship may be stronger or more complicated.
- Physical – you may be coping with side effects or physical changes after treatment. Having sex or how you both feel about sex may be different. Some cancer treatments can affect your fertility. This might change any plans to have children.

We have more information about sex and fertility after cancer (see page 56).

You may be facing challenges as a couple that you did not expect. Every couple copes with these in their own way. Think about how you have coped with challenges in the past. It usually helps to be open and honest with each other about how you feel.

New partners

Some people find it difficult to start a new relationship after cancer. You might worry how someone else will react when you say you had cancer. If your body has changed after treatment, you may worry about what new partners will think. It may help to decide when you will tell someone about your experience. You may choose to be very direct and open. Or you might decide to wait until you feel comfortable with a new person.

Managing work

For some people, work is an important part of life. If you find work difficult to cope with, you may need to take time off until you feel better. It can help to talk with your employer about the best way to manage this.

It is important to remember that your feelings can affect you when you are at work too. Sometimes it helps to talk to your employer or colleagues about this. This can help them understand what you are dealing with. Let them know what to expect and what you want from them.

You may prefer not to talk about your treatment or illness at work. You may want to keep this part of your life separate from work. It might be a good way of coping for you.

Going back to work after treatment can feel very different. Your priorities can change. You may want to consider working part-time or returning to work slowly.

We have more information about managing work and talking to your employer or colleagues. You can order our booklet **Work and cancer** which you may find helpful (see page 56).



WAYS TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Moving forward | 30 |
| Talking and getting support | 31 |
| Self-help and support groups | 33 |
| Online support | 35 |
| Write down your feelings | 36 |
| Be kind to yourself | 38 |
| Eat well | 39 |
| Be physically active | 41 |
| Try relaxation techniques | 43 |

Moving forward

It is important not to ignore your feelings after cancer treatment. They are a natural response to what has happened. But there are things you can do to look after yourself. These may help you cope as you recover.

You might want to take time to think about what you have been through. Or you may find it more helpful to think about the future. There is no right way or time to deal with what has happened to you.

'I put myself first now. I don't work late anymore. I used to work late all the time. My job and the social life that came with it was my life. But now, whatever happens, it's fine. Yes I want to be successful, but more importantly I want to be happy and I want to be healthy.'

Sarah

Talking and getting support

Many people do not like talking about cancer and how it is affecting them. You may find the idea of talking upsetting or uncomfortable. But talking to someone about how you feel can help you cope with your emotions. It is often the first step in helping you feel better. Talking about things can make you feel supported. It can also help you make decisions that are best for you.

You may want to talk to someone you know well. This could be a partner, family member or friend.

Or you may find it easier to talk to someone you do not know well. This could be your cancer doctor, GP or specialist nurse, or a religious or spiritual leader. Your doctor or nurse may be able to refer you to a psychologist or counsellor. Some organisations like Mind can offer this type of support too (see page 63).

You might find self-help groups or online communities useful (see pages 58 to 60). This might be a good option if you find it hard to talk to the people close to you. You can also speak to one of our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm.

We have a booklet called **Talking about cancer** which you may find helpful (see page 56).

How talking can help

There are a few ways that talking may help you:

- You may feel more supported and less anxious. Knowing someone else understands, cares and is there for you can reassure you that you are not alone.
- It can help you understand your feelings. When you keep everything inside, your thoughts often feel confusing. Talking can make your thoughts clearer.
- Talking allows you to express how you are feeling. Having a lot of concerns can feel overwhelming. Talking can ease the pressure and make you feel better.
- It helps you to know that your feelings are normal. You may feel guilty, weak or angry after a cancer diagnosis. Having someone listen to you without judging can reassure you that your thoughts are normal.
- Talking puts things into perspective. The more you worry about something, the worse it seems. It can be a big relief to say your feelings out loud.
- It can help you make important decisions. Talking can help you process how you feel about things. When you have to make decisions, you often think you know what other people are thinking or feeling. But sometimes they may surprise you with their views and help with tough decisions.

Self-help and support groups

Joining a self-help or support group can have many benefits. They give you a chance to talk to other people. These people may be in a similar situation to you or facing the same challenges. Talking to them can help you feel less alone and more normal. Support groups are a place to share experiences, ask questions and support each other. You may also feel able to discuss the cancer and how it affects you more honestly than you could with friends or family.

Some groups offer support for people with different types of cancer. Other groups are for people with a specific type of cancer. For example, there are breast care groups and laryngectomy groups. Support groups can also help carers, family and friends cope with what is happening. They can learn how to help you and how to take care of themselves. We have a booklet called **Looking after someone with cancer** which you may find helpful (see page 56).

Not everyone finds it easy to talk in a group. It may help to go along to see what the group is like and then decide if you want to go back. You might want to take someone you know with you for extra support.

Courses for people affected by cancer

Some cancer centres and organisations run short courses for people living with or after cancer. Your specialist nurse or cancer doctor may be able to give you information about courses in your area.

Help to Overcome Problems Effectively (HOPE) is a course to help people after cancer treatment. It was developed by Coventry University and Macmillan Cancer Support. This course is run in small groups that meet once a week for six weeks. It is free and takes place at different locations across the UK.

You can find out more online at learnzone.org.uk/courses

Online support

If you use the internet, you can join an online support group or chat room. There are groups about different types of cancer. There are more general groups where people chat about practical and emotional issues. There are also groups for carers, family members and friends.

You can share your own thoughts and feelings by posting messages for others to read and reply to. Or you can just read other people's comments or posts. These messages can sometimes be helpful. They can also be sad and difficult to read. It may help to know that other people feel like you do. You may feel less alone and learn how other people cope.

This might be helpful for you if you find it difficult to talk face to face. Online groups are also easy to leave. You do not need to say why you are leaving.

Our Online Community offers this type of support. It is quick and easy to join. You can talk to people in our chat rooms, blog about your experiences, make friends and join support groups (see page 59).

'I used the community to vent my worries to others who'd been in my situation. I still go on now just to read what others have posted and to see if I can offer to help someone else.'

Sarah

Write down your feelings

Some people find it helps to write down how they are feeling. Keeping a diary, journal or online blog can be a way of expressing how you feel without having to talk about it.

You might want to write down how you are feeling but are not sure where to start. You can try using our good days, bad days tool. You can use this to write down what makes a good or a bad day for you. We all have days when both good and bad things happen. There is space to write any next steps to help you have more good days. Look at your lists and ask yourself:

- What can I do to have more good days?
- Is there anything I can do to make sure I have fewer bad days?

The thinking tool was written by people affected by cancer. You can find more tools, stories and help using the tools by visiting **thinkaboutyourlife.org**

Writing things down does not work for everybody. Some people, prefer to paint, draw or play music.



Good days



Bad days

Next steps

Be kind to yourself

Find time to do something you enjoy every day. This may be:

- watching your favourite TV programme
- reading a magazine
- doing a hobby.

Try to find time to see friends or family members regularly. It is good to do this even if you do not feel like it. Spending time with other people can help improve your mood if you feel down.

Recognise your successes, even the small ones. This will help build up your confidence as you get back into your usual routine.



Eat well

Having a healthy, balanced diet is one of the best choices you can make for your overall health. Many people find making a positive change like eating well helps give them back a sense of control. It can also help you feel that you are doing the best for your health.

Eating well and keeping to a healthy weight will help you:

- keep or get back your strength
- have more energy
- increase your sense of well-being.

There is no evidence that eating a particular diet can cure a cancer. But a healthy, balanced diet can help reduce the risk of new cancers and other diseases, such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

A well-balanced diet should include:

- 5 portions of fresh fruit and vegetables a day
- foods high in fibre, such as beans and cereals
- some protein-rich foods, such as chicken, fish, nuts and pulses (like beans and lentils).

Try to eat less:

- red and processed meat
- salt
- pickled or smoked food.

If you are concerned about your weight, talk to your GP or practice nurse. They can tell you the right weight for your height. They can also give you advice if you need to lose or gain weight.

We have more information about in our booklets **Healthy eating and cancer**, and **Managing weight after cancer treatment** which you can order for free (see page 56).



Be physically active

When you are living with or after cancer, being physically active can have a positive impact on you. Being active can:

- reduce tiredness and some other treatment side effects
- reduce anxiety and depression
- improve your mood and quality of life
- strengthen your muscles, joints and bones
- improve your heart health
- reduce the risk of other health problems.

At first, you might be nervous about increasing your activity, especially if you have not been active for a while. You may worry that you are too tired, or you may not know where to start. It is important to remember that some exercise is better than none. Physical activity encourages the brain to produce chemicals that improve mood and reduce stress. These are called endorphins. It will also help you feel more in control, because you are doing something positive for yourself.

We have a booklet called **Physical activity and cancer**, which you may find helpful (see page 56).

You could exercise with family or friends. For example, you could all go for regular short walks. Or you could join a cancer rehabilitation programme and exercise with other people. They may understand you and what you are going through. It can also help your mood if you are active outdoors in fresh air and sunshine. You could try gardening or joining a walking group.

'I find that some exercise or activity is extremely helpful for both body and mind. It can be fun too! It doesn't need to be a marathon or a climb up Mount Kilimanjaro. Speed, height and distance are not important – the direction is.'

Ronny

Try relaxation techniques

There are relaxation techniques you can use to help you relax and cope with stress. These include meditation, yoga, regular physical activity or having a massage.

Some cancer support groups or organisations may offer relaxation, massage, aromatherapy or reflexology (see pages 61 to 64). You can ask your cancer doctor or specialist nurse if these are suitable for you.

Relaxation exercises can help you learn to relax your breathing or your body. You can find more information on stress and anxiety on the NHS website. You might also find it helpful to visit Anxiety UK's website. There are also many DVDs, CDs, online apps or podcasts you can use at home.

You can ask your GP about relaxation exercises. They may be able to refer you to a healthcare professional who can show you how to do them.

We have a booklet called **Cancer and complementary therapies** which you can order for free (see page 56).



MORE SUPPORT

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Talking to your healthcare team | 46 |
| Talking to family and friends | 47 |
| Talking therapies | 48 |
| Mindfulness and meditation | 52 |

Talking to your healthcare team

Sometimes you can feel overwhelmed by your emotions. They can start to affect your everyday life. You may decide to get more support. You might find it hard to ask for help. But just making the decision to ask can help you feel more in control.

You could start by going to your GP. Or you can talk to any member of your healthcare team who you feel comfortable with. Try to tell them how you really feel. It can help to write your feelings down before the appointment. This helps them give you the most useful advice or treatment. You might want to take someone with you for support. They can also help remember everything you want to discuss.

We have a booklet called **How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer** which you may find helpful (see page 56).

Talking to family and friends

If you can, talk openly about your feelings with people you trust. It can help you feel less anxious and frightened. Try to start a conversation and say how you feel. You may be surprised at how willing people are to listen and support you. When you ask someone for support, it can show them that you value them.

Do not feel you have to protect family and friends by always trying to be positive and look like you are doing well. The people close to you usually want to know how you are really feeling. Then they can support you. Being open also shows family and friends that it is okay for them to talk about their own feelings.

Sometimes it can be difficult to talk, even with close family and friends. You may worry about upsetting them or having to deal with their feelings, too. You may think they will not understand how you feel. But their reactions may surprise you. Some may disappoint you, but people are often more supportive than you expect.

You can call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00** if there are times you do not feel like talking to family and friends.

'At first I felt guilty talking about it. But I'm so glad I did, because talking is such a source of support for me. I think it helps my friends and family feel like they're doing something to help me too.'

Jane

Talking therapies

Talking therapies can help many people, including those who have anxiety or depression. You talk to a trained therapist about your thoughts and feelings.

A therapist may be a counsellor or psychologist. You may meet your therapist regularly. This is usually once a week for several months. Some people continue to see a therapist for years. All therapy sessions are confidential. This means you can trust your therapist with information that may be personal or feel embarrassing.

Therapists help you recognise, understand and deal with your emotions. Types of talking therapies include counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and psychotherapy. You usually have an assessment first to find out more about your needs. The therapist can then use the talking therapies that will work best for you.

You usually have talking therapies one-to-one with a therapist. But you can also have them in groups. In group therapy, the therapist encourages group members to share their feelings and experiences with each other. Other types of therapy, such as mindfulness and meditation (see pages 52 to 53), involve practising techniques by yourself in your own time.

Your GP or a member of your healthcare team may be able to refer you for NHS talking therapies. Or you can contact the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy to find information about private therapy (see page 62).

Counselling

Counselling can help you talk about your feelings. It is a type of talking therapy. At your appointment, you can talk to a trained counsellor, who will listen and support you without judging you. Counsellors will not usually give advice or tell you what to do. But they can help you:

- cope with changes in your relationships
- think about what is important to you
- deal with practical problems
- find new ways of coping.

You may be offered a single session of counselling, a short course of sessions over a few weeks or months, or a longer course that lasts for several months or years. It can take a number of sessions, but you should slowly start to feel better with the help and support of your counsellor. Counselling can happen:

- face to face
- in a group
- over the phone
- by email
- online, through live chat services.

Some GPs, hospitals and cancer treatment centres have their own counsellors, or they can refer you to one. If your employer has an employee assistance programme (EAP), you can often contact a counsellor that way. Ask your employer for more information about this.

Counselling may be free, or you may need to pay for it. This is more likely if you see a counsellor long term.

You can call our support line on **0808 808 00 00** for more information about finding a counsellor. Or you can contact the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (see page 62).

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a talking therapy. It can help you manage your problems better by changing the way you think and behave. It can be used to treat anxiety, panic attacks or depression, or other health problems.

The way we think can have a powerful effect on how we feel. People who are anxious or depressed often have negative patterns of thinking and behaviour. These can contribute to the anxiety or depression. CBT helps you to change these negative patterns.

The therapist will help you recognise the negative thoughts and help you find ways to change them. They will also help you find out which things give you a sense of satisfaction and pleasure.

You can ask your cancer doctor, specialist nurse or GP about any local support services that are available to you. You can also search for therapists on the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) website (see page 62).

CBT and other types of therapy are available on the NHS. There are also online CBT programmes that you can do on your own.

Psychological therapy

Clinical psychologists are trained to understand how people think and feel. They look at how people behave, particularly in stressful situations. A psychologist can help you recognise, understand and deal with your emotions using different methods.

Your GP can give you advice on how to contact a psychologist. They may be able to refer you for this therapy for free. Your hospital may also have a psychologist who can support you as part of your care.

You can contact the British Psychological Society to find information about private therapy. It is likely you will have to pay for this (see page 62).



Mindfulness and meditation

Mindfulness is a way of becoming more aware of your thoughts and feelings. It uses techniques like meditation, breathing exercises and yoga to help you focus on what is happening at that time. It can help you change the way you think about things. This can help reduce stress and anxiety. You can search for Mindfulness apps online.

Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) uses the techniques of mindfulness with some CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) to help you change how you think. MBCT was developed to support people in chronic pain and has been used in cancer support. MBCT is usually taught as an 8-week course, either in groups or individually. Some centres in the UK offer MBCT classes on the NHS. You can also learn MBCT online at **bemindfulonline.com**

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) also uses mindfulness. It focuses on accepting what you cannot control or change, while still doing things that will improve your quality of life.

Mindfulness classes are available from:

- the NHS – ask your doctor about what is available in your area or at your hospital
- Mind – courses are available throughout England and Wales (see page 63)
- Buddhist Centres – courses are available in England, Scotland and Wales
- Aware – the national depression charity for Northern Ireland runs courses in mindfulness (aware-ni.org/mindfulness)
- Kara – a free web resource, which introduces mindfulness meditation to people with cancer (thisiskara.com)
- a private practitioner – search for a certified mindfulness teacher at bemindful.co.uk

You can learn more by visiting mentalhealth.org.uk/publications and choosing 'How to look after your mental health using mindfulness'.

'I found a few meditations on the library website that I downloaded into my MP3 player. I don't use it often, but in times of worry and fear I have found it to be a good soother.'

Eva



FURTHER INFORMATION

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| About our information | 56 |
| Other ways we can help you | 58 |
| Other useful organisations | 61 |

About our information

We provide expert, up-to-date information about cancer. And all our information is free for everyone.

Order what you need

You may want to order more leaflets or booklets like this one. Visit **be.macmillan.org.uk** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

We have booklets on different cancer types, treatments and side effects. We also have information about work, financial issues, diet, life after cancer and information for carers, family and friends.

Online information

All of our information is also available at **macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support**

There you'll also find videos featuring real-life stories from people affected by cancer, and information from health and social care professionals.

Other formats

We also provide information in different languages and formats, including:

- audiobooks
- Braille
- British Sign Language
- easy read booklets
- eBooks
- large print
- translations.

Find out more at **macmillan.org.uk/otherformats**

If you'd like us to produce information in a different format for you, email us at **cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Help us improve our information

We know that the people who use our information are the real experts. That's why we always involve them in our work. If you've been affected by cancer, you can help us improve our information.

We give you the chance to comment on a variety of information including booklets, leaflets and fact sheets.

If you'd like to hear more about becoming a reviewer, email reviewing@macmillan.org.uk You can get involved from home whenever you like, and we don't ask for any special skills – just an interest in our cancer information.



Other ways we can help you

At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything, and we're here to support you.

Talk to us

If you or someone you know is affected by cancer, talking about how you feel and sharing your concerns can really help.

Macmillan Support Line

Our free, confidential phone line is open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Our cancer support specialists can:

- help with any medical questions you have about cancer or your treatment
- help you access benefits and give you financial guidance
- be there to listen if you need someone to talk to
- tell you about services that can help you in your area.

Call us on **0808 808 00 00** or email us via our website, **[macmillan.org.uk/talktous](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/talktous)**

Information centres

Our information and support centres are based in hospitals, libraries and mobile centres. There, you can speak with someone face to face.

Visit one to get the information you need, or if you'd like a private chat, most centres have a room where you can speak with someone alone and in confidence.

Find your nearest centre at **[macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres)** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Talk to others

No one knows more about the impact cancer can have on your life than those who have been through it themselves. That's why we help to bring people together in their communities and online.

Support groups

Whether you are someone living with cancer or a carer, we can help you find support in your local area, so you can speak face to face with people who understand. 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

Thousands of people use our Online Community to make friends, blog about their experiences and join groups to meet other people going through the same things. You can access it any time of day or night. Share your experiences, ask questions, or just read through people's posts at [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)

The Macmillan healthcare team

Our nurses, doctors and other health and social care professionals give expert care and support to individuals and their families. Call us or ask your GP, consultant, district nurse or hospital ward sister if there are any Macmillan professionals near you.

'Everyone is so supportive on the Online Community, they know exactly what you're going through. It can be fun too. It's not all just chats about cancer.'

Mal

Help with money worries

Having cancer can bring extra costs such as hospital parking, travel fares and higher heating bills. If you've been affected in this way, we can help.

Financial guidance

Our financial team can give you guidance on mortgages, pensions, insurance, borrowing and savings.

Help accessing benefits

Our benefits advisers can offer advice and information on benefits, tax credits, grants and loans. They can help you work out what financial help you could be entitled to. They can also help you complete your forms and apply for benefits.

Macmillan Grants

Macmillan offers one-off payments to people with cancer. A grant can be for anything from heating bills or extra clothing to a much-needed break.

Call us on **0808 808 00 00** to speak to a financial guide or benefits adviser, or to find out

more about Macmillan Grants. We can also tell you about benefits advisers in your area. Visit **macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport** to find out more about how we can help you with your finances.

Help with work and cancer

Whether you're an employee, a carer, an employer or are self-employed, we can provide support and information to help you manage cancer at work. Visit **macmillan.org.uk/work**

Work support

Our dedicated team of work support advisers can help you understand your rights at work. Call us on **0808 808 00 00** to speak to a work support adviser (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).

Macmillan Organiser

This includes a records book to write down information such as appointments, medications and contact details. You can order a free organiser at **be.macmillan.org.uk**

Other useful organisations

There are lots of other organisations that can give you information or support. Details correct at time of printing.

General cancer support organisations

Cancer Black Care

Tel 020 8961 4151

www.cancerblackcare.org.uk

Offers UK-wide information and support for people for people with cancer, as well as their friends, carers and families, with a focus on those from BME communities.

Cancer Focus Northern Ireland

Helpline 0800 783 3339
(Mon to Fri, 9am to 1pm)

Email nurseline@cancerfocusni.org

www.cancerfocusni.org

Offers a variety of services to people affected by cancer in Northern Ireland.

Cancer Support Scotland

Tel 0800 652 4531

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)

Email info@cancersupportscotland.org

cancersupportscotland.org

www.cancersupportscotland.org

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

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.

Maggie's

Tel 0300 123 1801

Email enquiries@maggies.org

www.maggies.org

Has a network of centres in many locations throughout the UK. Provides free information about cancer and financial benefits. Also offers emotional and social support to people with cancer, their family, and friends.

Penny Brohn UK

Helpline 0303 300 0118 (Mon to Fri, 10am to 2pm)

Email info@pennybrohn.org.uk

www.pennybrohn.org.uk

Offers physical, emotional and spiritual support across the UK, using complementary therapies and self-help techniques.

Counselling

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Tel 0145 588 3300 (Mon to Fri, 10am to 4pm)

Email bacp@bacp.co.uk

Promotes awareness of counselling and signposts people to appropriate services across the UK. You can search for a qualified counsellor at itsgoodtotalk.org.uk

The British Psychological Society (BPS)

Tel 0116 254 9568

Email enquiries@bps.org.uk

www.bps.org.uk

A representative body for psychology and psychologists in the UK. Runs a Register of Chartered Psychologists, organises conferences, publishes journals and provides information to the public.

**UK Council for
Psychotherapy (UKCP)**
Tel 0207 014 9955
Email info@ukcp.org.uk
www.psychotherapy.org.uk

Holds the national register of psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic counsellors, listing practitioners who meet exacting standards and training requirements.

Emotional and mental health support

Beacon
Tel 028 9032 8474
Email
info@beaconwellbeing.org
www.beaconwellbeing.org

A network of emotional, psychological and social well-being support services throughout Northern Ireland.

Breathing Space
Tel 0800 83 85 87
 (Mon to Thu, 6pm to 2am, and weekends from 6pm Fri to 6am Mon)
www.breathingspace.scot
 A free, confidential phone and web-based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety.

Lifeline
Tel 0808 808 8000
 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)
Textphone
 18001 0808 808 8000
www.lifelinehelpline.info
 Crisis response service for people in distress or despair in Northern Ireland.

Mental Health Foundation
www.mentalhealth.org.uk/podcasts-and-videos
 Provides free well-being podcasts through its website. These include relaxation and mindfulness exercises.

Mind
Helpline 0300 123 3393
 (Mon to Fri, 9am to 6pm)
Email info@mind.org.uk
www.mind.org.uk
 Provides information, advice and support to anyone with a mental health problem through its helpline and website.

Relate

Tel 0300 100 1234

www.relate.org.uk

Offers a range of services to help with couple and family relationships. Available face-to-face, by phone and online.

Rethink Mental Illness

Tel 0300 5000 927

(Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 4pm)

Email advice@rethink.org

www.rethink.org

Provides mental health advice and information by phone and through its website.

Samaritans

Helpline 116 123

Email jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org

Provides confidential and non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

LGBT-specific support

LGBT Foundation

Tel 0345 330 3030

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 9pm)

Email helpline@lgbt.foundation

www.lgbt.foundation

Provides a range of services to the LGBT community, including a helpline, email advice and counselling. The website has information on various topics including sexual health, relationships, mental health, community groups and events.

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 photos are of models.

Thanks

This booklet has been written, revised and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been approved by Prof Tim Iveson, Macmillan Chief Medical Editor.

With thanks to: Karen Bowes, Specialist Palliative Care Nurse; Michelle Buono, Education Nurse; Mark Cawley, Lead Nurse Palliative and End of Life Care; Shirley Crofts, Clinical Nurse Specialist and Clinical Psychologist; Christopher Hewitt, Consultant Clinical Psychologist; Elaine Heywood, Macmillan Counsellor; Matt Loveridge, Clinical Nurse Specialist; Annabel Price, Psychiatrist Associate Specialist Director for Palliative Care; Louise Robinson, Clinical Psychologist; Helen Sanderson, thinkaboutyourlife.org; and Susan Williamson, Senior Research Fellow.

Thanks also to the people affected by cancer who reviewed this edition, and those who shared their stories.

We welcome feedback on our information. If you have any, please contact [**cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk**](mailto:cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk)

Sources

We have listed a sample of the sources used in the booklet below. If you would like more information about the sources we use, please contact us at **cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk**

Harvey, P. After the treatment finishes – then what? 2013. Available from www.workingwithcancer.co.uk (accessed February 2018). MIND (National Association for Mental Health). Anxiety and panic attacks. 2017. Available from www.mind.org.uk (accessed online February 2018). MIND (National Association for Mental Health). Wellbeing. 2016. Available from www.mind.org.uk (accessed online February 2018).

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

Please fill in your personal details

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Other

Name

Surname

Address

Postcode

Phone

Email

Please accept my gift of £

(Please delete as appropriate)

I enclose a cheque / postal order /
Charity Voucher made payable to
Macmillan Cancer Support

OR debit my:

Visa / MasterCard / CAF Charity
Card / Switch / Maestro

Card number

| | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| □□□□ | □□□□ | □□□□ | □□□□ |
|------|------|------|------|

Valid from

| | |
|----|----|
| □□ | □□ |
|----|----|

Expiry date

| | |
|----|----|
| □□ | □□ |
|----|----|

Issue no

| |
|-----|
| □□□ |
|-----|

Security number

| |
|-----|
| □□□ |
|-----|

Signature

Date

/ /

Don't let the taxman keep your money

Do you pay tax? If so, your gift will be worth 25% more to us – at no extra cost to you. All you have to do is tick the box below, and the tax office will give 25p for every pound you give.

- I am a UK tax payer and I would like Macmillan Cancer Support to treat all donations I make or have made to Macmillan Cancer Support in the last 4 years as Gift Aid donations, until I notify you otherwise.

I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand Macmillan Cancer Support will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.

Macmillan Cancer Support and our trading companies would like to hold your details in order to contact you about our fundraising, campaigning and services for people affected by cancer. If you would prefer us not to use your details in this way please tick this box.

In order to carry out our work we may need to pass your details to agents or partners who act on our behalf.



If you'd rather donate online go to macmillan.org.uk/donate

Please cut out this form and return it in an envelope (no stamp required) to:
Supporter Donations, Macmillan Cancer Support, FREEPOST LON15851,
89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UQ

This booklet is for people who have had cancer treatment. You may also find it helpful if you are still having treatment. It describes some of the feelings you may have and suggests ways to cope with them.

Feelings can vary from person to person. We hope it helps to know that your feelings are natural and that there are ways of dealing with them.

At Macmillan, we give people with cancer everything we've got. If you are diagnosed, your worries are our worries. We will help you live life as fully as you can.

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call **0808 808 00 00** or visit **macmillan.org.uk**

Would you prefer to speak to us in another language? Interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use. Are you deaf or hard of hearing? Call us using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app.

Need information in different languages or formats? We produce information in audio, eBooks, easy read, Braille, large print and translations. To order these, visit **macmillan.org.uk/otherformats** or call our support line.

The logo consists of a blue rounded rectangle containing the text 'Trusted Information Creator' in black. To the right of the text is a green checkmark with a yellow shadow.

Trusted
Information
Creator

Patient Information Forum