

# Talking about cancer





**“ Jane has an ability to be very open and direct and talk about things other people might find awkward. ”**

Sarah (right), diagnosed with breast cancer

# About this booklet

This booklet is about talking about cancer. It is for anyone who has a cancer diagnosis.

The booklet explains:

- the benefits of talking about cancer
- how to overcome the things that make talking difficult
- how to deal with other people's reactions.

It also has practical tips for talking and asking for support.

We hope it helps you deal with some of the questions or feelings you may have.

This booklet does not have information for the family and friends of someone with a cancer diagnosis. We have other booklets about talking about cancer that could help:

- **Talking with someone who has cancer**
- **Talking to children and teenagers when an adult has cancer.**

See page 76 for information about ordering these booklets.

## How to use this booklet

The 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 the page opposite to help you.

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

## Quotes

In this booklet, we have included quotes from people who have had cancer. Some are from **healthtalk.org**, and others are from people who have chosen to share their story with us. This includes Sarah, who is on the cover of this booklet with her friend Jane. To share your story, visit **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**

If you would prefer to speak to us in another language, interpreters are available.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can contact our support line using the Next Generation Text Service (NGT) by dialling **18001 0808 808 00 00**.

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** or call **0808 808 00 00**.

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**'Jane has an ability to talk about things other people might find awkward. I've been very lucky to have that outlet of someone to talk to.'**

**Sarah**

# WHY TALK ABOUT CANCER?

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# Talking about a cancer diagnosis

When you have cancer, you may find the idea of talking about it upsetting or uncomfortable. It may take you some time to accept your diagnosis. There is no right or wrong way to cope.

Talking about cancer may seem overwhelming. But it is important to think about who needs to know and the best way to talk to them. It can help you get the support you need. This might be from family and friends, your employer and colleagues, or your healthcare team. It can also help you make decisions that are right for you.

Many people do not like talking about their own needs. You might be worried about upsetting someone. Or you might think people will see you as demanding. But it is okay and important to talk to others. There are often relatives, friends and neighbours who want to help. Try starting a conversation and saying what you need, even if it is just for them to listen. Asking someone for their support shows you value them.

We also have information that might be helpful for the people you are talking to (see page 76).

Sometimes you might want to tell someone who you are not close to about the cancer. For example, this might be your dentist or a travel company. Remember these professionals are there to help you. You might want to take someone with you, or have them with you while you make a phone call.



# The benefits of talking

Talking can help if you feel worried or uncertain. It can also help you cope better with any difficulties you may have. It can give you support and help you have some control over your situation.

There are many possible benefits of talking. There are examples of this below and over the next few pages.

## Understand how you are feeling and why

You may feel confused about how you are feeling. Putting your thoughts into words can help you understand what you are feeling and why.

## Express how you are feeling

You may feel overwhelmed by lots of worries. Talking about how you are feeling can help with this.

## **Be reassured that your feelings are normal**

You may have lots of different emotions. Having someone listen to you without judgement may reassure you that what you are feeling is normal.

## **Find the answer to a problem**

Talking with another person may help you think of solutions that you might not have thought of on your own.

## **Feel more in control**

Talking may make you feel more confident about dealing with any difficult issues. It may also make you feel better about having hard conversations.

## **Make important decisions**

If you have to make decisions that affect other people, you might think you know what they are thinking or feeling. But sometimes they surprise you with their views and can help you make hard decisions.

## **Feel more supported and less anxious**

Talking can help you feel that someone else understands, cares and is there for you. This may reassure you that you are not going through hard times alone.

## **Build bonds with your family and friends**

When you talk with people close to you about personal issues and include them in important decisions, it often makes them feel valued.

If you feel you cannot talk to your family or friends, there are other people who can offer support (see pages 11 to 16).



# Who can you talk to?

Think about who you usually talk to about important issues or difficult problems. This is probably the best person to talk to. They could be anyone – a partner, a family member, your closest friend, a work colleague, a counsellor or a religious leader. It may be somebody who is going through or has been through a similar experience.

## Family, friends and people you work with

Some people have a close group of family and friends who can give them a lot of support. Or they may have close relationships with people they work with. But even with supportive people around you, it may be hard to talk about cancer. You may feel isolated.

We have tips on telling family and friends about your diagnosis and asking for support (see pages 26 to 29). We also have information about talking about cancer at work (see pages 44 to 49).

Some people may have disagreements in their family or have friends that live far away. They may work alone or not be close to the people they work with. If you are in this situation, you may feel there is no one to talk to.

It may be easier to talk with someone you do not know. You may feel less pressure to behave a certain way. You may also feel safe knowing they will not share the conversation with your family or friends. If you feel this way, there are different groups, organisations and healthcare professionals that can help you.

## Support helplines

### Macmillan Support Line

You can contact the Macmillan Support Line, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. You can talk about a cancer diagnosis and treatment, discuss money worries, get guidance about work, or just have someone listen to you. Our team includes:

- cancer information support officers, who can give you emotional support or just be someone to talk to
- cancer information nurse specialists, who can answer your questions about cancer or its treatment
- financial guides, who can give guidance on financial issues, including mortgages, pensions, insurance and savings
- welfare rights advisers, who can provide information on any benefits and grants you may be able to claim
- energy specialists, who can help you find support if you are struggling with your bills
- work support advisers, who can support you and anyone caring for you with work issues.

## Other support lines

If you need to talk to someone when our support line is closed, you can contact any of the following 24-hour services.

For medical help or advice:

- In England, call NHS 111 on **111**.
- In Scotland, call NHS 24 on **111**.
- In Wales, call NHS Direct Wales on **0845 4647**.
- In Northern Ireland, it varies by region – see pages 84 to 85.

For emotional support:

- Call Samaritans free on **116 123** (UK-wide).

## Self-help and support groups

Joining a self-help or support group can have many benefits. You can talk with other people who may be in a similar situation and facing the same challenges. It can be a place to share experiences, ask questions and support each other. You may also feel able to talk about the cancer and how it affects you more openly than you can with friends.

Some groups offer support for people with any type of cancer. Other groups are for people with a specific type of cancer. For example, there are breast care groups and laryngectomy groups. These 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.

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

## What happens at a support group?

Every cancer support group is different. Some groups have a few people and meet regularly at someone's house. Others are much bigger and might have a meeting room.

You can expect a warm welcome from someone who has been in the group for some time. They will introduce you to other members and you can tell them about yourself. You do not have to talk about anything you do not want to. It can take a few visits before you feel comfortable enough to talk about personal matters.

Most groups give their leaders training in listening skills. They can listen in a positive, caring way. Meetings could include an activity, a social event or a talk from a guest speaker. You may be able to access support services through the group, including complementary therapies, counselling or bereavement support. Most groups are free. Some may charge for tea and biscuits or accept donations for any support services they offer.

If you have questions about how a group works, contact the organiser. They can tell you:

- what to expect
- how big the group is
- some common discussion topics and activities.

## How do you find a support group?

You can search online for groups in your area by visiting [macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups) Or you can ask someone from your healthcare team. You can also call our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00** for more information.

Every group is very different. If there are several groups in your area, you could go to a few and see which one is best for you.



## Counselling

Counselling is a type of talking therapy. A trained counsellor will listen to you and support you without judging you. Counsellors do not usually give advice or tell you what to do. But they can give you space to talk about your concerns. A counsellor 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 could have:

- one session of counselling
- a short course of sessions over a few weeks or months
- a longer course that lasts for several months or years.

You can have counselling:

- 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. You are more likely to need to pay if you see a counsellor long-term.

You can call the Macmillan 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 80).

## Online support

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

You can share your 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 hard to read. It may help to know other people feel like you do. You may feel less alone and learn how other people cope with having cancer.

Online support might be helpful for you if you find it hard 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 (see page 78) offers this type of support. It is quick and easy to join. You can talk to people on our forums, blog about your experiences, make friends and join support groups.



# Things that make it hard to talk

Many people used to think cancer should not be talked about. But things have changed and now talking about cancer is widely accepted. People talk about it in magazines, on TV and online. They also talk about it in day-to-day conversation.

Talking about cancer can still be hard. Being diagnosed with cancer is often a life-changing experience. It can have a big effect on your emotions, as well as on the practical aspects of your life.

At first, talking about it might make it feel very real. You might be afraid that talking will make you lose control of your feelings. But it is okay to cry or shout. You might also feel embarrassed or self-conscious talking about your health. Before you talk to other people, try to think about how you feel and what you want to say. Writing down your thoughts may help you communicate better.

Your family and friends may also find it hard to talk about the cancer, because they are finding it hard to accept it. You might want to avoid talking because you are the main carer in your family and others rely on you. Some people have never had a serious illness or known anyone who has. They may be unsure of what you need or how to talk to you. Often people use humour to talk about cancer. It may seem insensitive, but it is often a good way of coping with their own fears. People often want to tell you stories about their own experiences of cancer, or the experiences of people they know. This might help, or you might find it annoying or upsetting. It is okay to feel this way.

You may be afraid of losing your job or being discriminated against at work. Or you may feel your healthcare team are too busy to talk about your feelings. We have information about talking to your employer (see pages 44 to 45) and talking to healthcare staff (see pages 52 to 61). You may live alone or have no one close to talk to. We have information about connecting with other people if you feel lonely or isolated in our booklet

**How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer** (see page 76).

Do not feel there is a 'right' way to talk about cancer. Talking can be hard. You do not need to put any pressure on yourself to have the perfect conversation.

# If you do not want to talk

Some people do not want to talk about their thoughts or feelings, or about the cancer and its treatment. They would rather just get on with life. They may find that doing normal, day-to-day things and not talking about the cancer is the best way for them to cope.

If you do not feel ready to talk, you could practice what to say when people ask how you are. For example, you could say, 'Thank you for asking how I am. I'll let you know when I feel ready to talk.'

But not talking about the cancer at all can cause problems after a while. It may become hard to make decisions about treatment or about work. This can delay the start of your treatment and cause problems with your finances and relationships.

## Dealing with family and friends

You may not want to talk about the cancer, but your family and friends may want to. If this happens, try to be open and honest with them. Let them know it is hard for you to talk. You could tell them you might not feel able to share everything.

If family or friends want to talk about the cancer when you do not, it can cause conflict. We have tips on resolving conflict in relationships (see pages 71 to 73).

Only you can decide how much you want to talk about your diagnosis or treatment. For example, if you are going out with friends, you could tell them you would rather not talk about cancer today. Or you could say you will talk about it when you feel able to.

We have more information about dealing with difficult feelings in our booklet **How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer**. We also have advice for family and friends in our booklet **Talking with someone who has cancer**. See page 76 for details on how to order these.

'I couldn't watch adverts about cancer or read stories about anyone having cancer, because I felt like I had never actually sat down and spoken about what I went through.'

Megan

# If the cancer cannot be cured

People who have a terminal illness sometimes feel they have to be the strong one and support other people. They feel they have to start the hard conversations, even though they are the one who is ill. But if you are unwell or feeling low, it can be very hard to do this.

Try talking openly about how you feel and what would help. This way, your family and friends will learn how they can support you and what you would like from them. You can choose the people you want to talk to and who you feel will be able to help you. You can plan when you want to talk to them and what you want to say.

Sometimes it can help to talk to someone outside your own family and friends. This could be a counsellor or a support organisation (see pages 80 to 88).

Marie Curie also has information about having difficult conversations. Visit [mariecurie.org.uk/help](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/help)



## Talking to children

There is no easy way to tell children or grandchildren that you might be nearing the end of your life. It is often best to be as open with them as you can and give them information they can understand.

Children are often very aware of what is happening around them. Even if you do not say anything, they usually sense that something is wrong and may become frightened. If they are told everything is fine, they may find it hard to talk about how they are feeling.

Children can also feel they are somehow to blame for your illness. So it is important to tell them it is not their fault.

How you tell children and what you choose to tell them depends on:

- their age
- how much they can understand.

We have a booklet called **Preparing a child for loss**, which you may find helpful (see page 76).



**'We didn't treat it as a secret, as we wanted all of us to be able to discuss our concerns openly.'**

**Sean**

# TALKING WITH PEOPLE CLOSE TO YOU

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# Talking about your diagnosis

If you have close family or friends, telling them about a cancer diagnosis can be hard. But it is important to remember the cancer also affects them.

They will worry about you, because you are an important part of their life. They might worry about any changes you may have to make to your life. Or they may worry about the financial impact cancer might have.

You may worry about how your family or friends will react to the news. Or you may feel guilty about how the cancer and its treatment might affect their lives.

'I was feeling really nervous about having to go home and tell my wife. I wasn't sure how she would react, but knew it was going to be difficult.'

**Ashley**

## Taking someone to hospital appointments

You may want to ask someone to go to hospital appointments with you. It can make conversations about the cancer easier. It can give your partner, family member or friend a chance to:

- ask the doctor any questions you or they have
- take notes about important information.

It can also help you feel supported and cared for.

Before you go to an appointment, it can help to prepare any questions you have. Sometimes you might find it hard to ask your medical team the right questions and remember their answers.

If someone comes with you, they can help you remember what was said. You can also ask them to help you tell other people, or tell other people for you.

## Telling people the news

If you have told your family and friends you have had tests, they might be waiting to hear the results. This may make you feel under pressure. You may feel forced into talking about the cancer before you are ready. It can help to tell them you need some time before you are ready to talk about it in detail. If you do not want to talk, we have more information about the reasons for talking about cancer (see pages 6 to 23).

People usually tell the people closest to them first. If you have children, it is important to tell them. This will give them the chance to talk openly about their fears and worries. Talking about the cancer can help them feel more secure. Depending on how old they are, you might need to prepare more for this conversation. You may need some time to process the news yourself first. We have a booklet called **Talking to children and teenagers when an adult has cancer** (see page 76).

Other family members or friends may say nothing. This could be because they are afraid of saying the wrong thing. You may have to start the conversation with them.

Here are some things you could consider before you talk to them:

- Make a list of who you want to talk to in person.
- Take some paper to write down any questions they ask, so you can ask your healthcare team.
- The first time you talk with someone, think about how much you want to share. You may want to tell them the type of cancer you have and which treatments you may need.
- Remember that at any point you can say you need a break and will talk more at a later time.
- Try to find a good place to talk. If you are in a space you find quiet and comfortable, it can help the conversation.

# Practical tips for talking

Talking about your situation can help people support you better. It may also help you feel less alone. Talking can sometimes help make you feel better, even if nothing has changed.

The following tips can help make a hard conversation a bit easier.

## During the first conversation, introduce the subject slowly

Try to do this in whatever way is most natural to you. If you are struggling, you could try saying something like:

- 'This is going to be difficult, but I need to tell you something.'
- 'I've had some bad news, but there is a good chance that everything will be okay after I have had treatment.'
- 'You know I have been feeling unwell for a while. I have had some tests and they have found out what is wrong.'

## Tell them in the way that feels best for you

Sometimes it is easier to give the news over the phone, in a letter or by email. If you are far away, this may be the only option.

## Ask what they already know

This can stop you having to repeat things.



## Give the information in small chunks

Say a few sentences and then check the other person understands what you are saying before you carry on.

You can ask things such as, 'Does that make sense?'. Asking the other person if they understand may help you feel listened to.

## Do not worry about silences

You, your family member or friend may sometimes not know what to say. Holding hands, hugging or just sitting together can often say more than any words.

Sometimes silence might make you feel uncomfortable. If this happens, you could break it with a simple question such as, 'What are you thinking about?'

## Say what you need to say

You may want to be positive and cheerful to make your family member or friend feel better. If you are not feeling too worried, this is fine. But if you are really worried about the future, it is important they know how you feel. That way they will be able to support you.

## Be truthful

It is better for your family and friends to know the truth now, rather than find out later. If they find out later, they may feel hurt and upset that they have not been able to support you.

Tell your family and friends if it is difficult to know whether your treatment will be successful. This will help them support you better.

## Think about which issues are most important to you

You may feel as though there is a lot on your mind. But when you focus your thoughts, you might find there are only two or three things that you really want to discuss.

Try to tell the person if there is something specific that is worrying you. It may be easier to narrow this down by taking the conversation in stages. You could start by saying something general, such as, 'I'm worried about how things are at the moment.'

## Ask for help to tell others

Explaining the cancer diagnosis to people can be exhausting. You can choose someone you trust to tell other family members or friends. Let them know what information you are happy for them to share.

## It is okay to go back to small talk

You do not have to discuss serious issues all the time. Just chatting about everyday things can also help you feel that normal life still goes on.

## Accept and ask for support

It is important to remember that you do not have to cope on your own. Family and friends will often offer their support. If you cannot think of anything, thank them and tell them you may come back to them later. If they have not offered support, do not be afraid to ask. Use these tips to help when you ask for support.

You may want to use the table on the next page to write down what support you need. We have added one example. Perhaps you feel that you need support, but do not know how others could give it. This may be a useful starting point for a conversation with people close to you.

**What is important to me**

**How to support me**

*To carry on working* \_\_\_\_\_

*Ask to help with the housework* \_\_\_\_\_

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# If you have a partner

For any couple, talking is important to work through issues such as money, work and childcare (if you have children). This is even more important after a cancer diagnosis.

Some people find their relationship changes because of cancer. This may depend on:

- how long you have been together
- how long you have had cancer
- how cancer affects your day-to-day life
- how well you and your partner understand the changes you are going through.

We have more information about cancer and relationships (see page 76). This might help you with some of the issues you and your partner may face.

*'My relationship with my wife suffered after the diagnosis. We slowly moved further and further apart, as we buried our fears. Psychological support really helped bring us back together.'*

**Ashley**

## Practical tips for talking to your partner

### **Let your partner know how they can support you**

We have more tips on asking for support (see pages 33 to 34).

### **Ask your partner to come to hospital appointments**

This can help you feel supported and make conversations easier. Your partner will feel valued, as they can ask questions too.

### **Remember your partner will be affected too**

A cancer diagnosis affects both you and your partner. So let them talk to you about how they feel as well. This can be a great help for both of you.

### **Talk together as a team**

Often partners try to protect each other by not being honest about their fears and concerns. But talking about your feelings may make it easier for your partner to be honest about theirs. Talking may help you understand each other and feel closer.

### **Deal with strong emotions**

You may have many different feelings, including shock, grief, anger and anxiety. Strong emotions can make talking difficult. We have tips on managing any disagreements on pages 71 to 73.

### **Remember that talking is only one way to communicate**

Facial expressions, body language, gestures and tone of voice are all part of how you express your thoughts and feelings.

### **Write down your feelings**

It might help to share these with your partner. The table on page 34 may help with this.



## **Nurture your relationship**

Spend time together and plan fun activities. It is important to try to keep to your normal routine as much as possible.

## **Talk about whether cancer is affecting your sex life**

Cancer and its treatment may affect your sex life. But it does not have to mean an end to sex and intimacy. We have information about how cancer and its treatments can affect your sexuality, sex life and relationships (see page 76).

## **Find support outside of the relationship**

It might be helpful for you or your partner to talk to someone else as well. You could speak to a counsellor or go to a support group (see pages 13 to 16), either on your own or with your partner. Organisations such as Relate and Relationships Scotland can provide more information (see page 81). Our Online Community can also be a good place to find other people who are going through a similar experience – visit [community.macmillan.org.uk](https://community.macmillan.org.uk)

## **If your partner is your carer**

Your partner may also be your carer. A carer is anyone who provides unpaid support to a family member, partner, friend or neighbour who could not manage without this help. If your partner is your carer, this can also have a big impact on your relationship.

We have more information for carers in our booklet **Looking after someone with cancer**, which your partner may find helpful (see page 76).



# If you are single

If you are single, you may or may not feel like this is the right time to start a new relationship.

If you do want to start a new relationship, it might be hard to decide:

- what to tell a new partner about the cancer
- when to tell a new partner about the cancer.

It is best to be open with the other person and make time to talk about your situation.

If you think you need some help, you can get support from family and friends. Or you could contact an organisation such as Relate or Relationships Scotland (see page 81). You can also talk to our cancer support specialists by calling **0808 808 00 00**.

# Talking to children and young people

If you can talk to children about the cancer in a way they can understand, they may cope better with it.

You might feel you are helping to protect your children by not telling them. But children often know when something serious is affecting their family. Not knowing what is happening may cause some children more distress. This may have a negative impact on your relationship with them.

## Benefits of talking to your children

There are many benefits to being open with your children. Talking about the cancer can help them feel more secure. It also lets them ask questions and tell you how they feel about it.

If they know about the cancer, it means you can be more open about what you say.

*'I thought, we'd be honest with him from day one, rather than him finding out later and blaming us that we didn't tell him. And he was wonderful.'*

**Sam**

## If you do not talk to your children

If you do not talk to your children about the cancer, they may feel frightened because they do not know what is happening. They may also feel alone, or worried. They might feel they have no one to talk to.


Children often find out about what is going on even when you have not told them. For example, they may hear something from friends whose families know yours. They may wonder if they can trust you to tell them about important things.

## How your children may react

Children can react in lots of different ways. Their understanding and behaviour will depend on how old they are. Be prepared to repeat the information. This can be hard if the subject is painful for you.

Younger children may not understand what is happening, but they will be aware of changes to their routine. Teenagers or young people usually understand, but they may find it hard to talk about.

Our booklet **Talking to children and teenagers when an adult has cancer** has more information (see page 76).



**'I found it helpful talking to people to get things off my chest, even if they couldn't really understand what I was going through.'**

**Paul**

**PA**

# TALKING AT WORK

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# Talking to your employer

Many people find their employer supportive. But some people worry about telling their employer they have cancer. They may worry their employer will not support them, will sack (dismiss) them or will find an excuse to make them redundant. This should not happen.

If you have cancer, the law considers this a disability. This means you cannot be treated less favourably than other people (who do not have cancer) because you have cancer, or for reasons connected to the cancer. That would be discrimination. You may want to talk to:

- your line manager
- your human resources (HR) manager
- an occupational health adviser
- your trade union representative.

If you feel nervous, you could take someone with you. You could also ask for the conversation to be in a private place and not be rushed.

If your employer knows about your illness, you may be able to suggest reasonable adjustments they can make. These are changes that can help you keep working or return to work. For example, this could mean time off for hospital appointments or flexible working arrangements. If you do not tell your employer about your illness and your ability to do your job is affected, it could cause problems later.

We have more information about the laws that protect you at work in our booklet **Work and cancer** (see page 76). For more advice, you can also speak to a Macmillan work support adviser by calling **0808 808 00 00**.

You can also watch our video of people talking about how they told their colleagues about their cancer diagnosis. It also includes advice from HR professionals on how to talk about cancer. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/talkingaboutcanceratwork](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/talkingaboutcanceratwork)

## Asking your employer questions

You might like to ask your employer the following questions:

- Where can I find any company or organisation policies about my situation?
- Can we talk about what to tell everyone at work about the cancer and how it affects my work situation?
- How can my job be adjusted so I spend less time on tasks that cause me discomfort?

We have more information about questions to ask about work and cancer. We also have more information about employment rights and coping with the effects of treatment at work (see page 76).

# Talking to other people at work

You may find it hard to talk to people you work with about your diagnosis. You may worry about how they will react or if it will be awkward.

The first people you tell may be those you feel closest to. They may be able to help you plan how to tell other people.

Telling people can have benefits:

- It gives them the chance to support you and know what to expect.
- You can let them know when you need help.
- They may suggest helpful ways for you to cope with your work.
- It may make you feel closer to the people you work with.
- There may be people with experience of cancer who could support you.

You could give people a short explanation of your treatment and its side effects. Tell them if tiredness is a problem, if your concentration is affected or if you are at risk of infection.

Sometimes people may avoid you. This is usually because they do not know what to say or are worried about saying the wrong thing. Showing them you can talk openly about your illness may help.



# If you are self-employed

As a self-employed person, you may feel there are fewer people you can talk to. This can feel isolating. You can call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00** to talk about how you are feeling. You can also talk to one of our work support advisers or financial guides on the Macmillan Support Line. They can give guidance on the practical needs of you and your business. It may also help to find someone who works in the same area of work as you. They may be able to give you advice on your business.

When you are self-employed, other people or businesses may rely on you to deliver goods or services. They may also rely on your payments. They might need to know you have cancer. You will have to balance your feelings about telling people with the needs of your business. For example, the cancer may mean you cannot drive. If you do not tell the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency), you could be fined. But some people and businesses may not need to know. It is your choice whether to tell them or not.

It may be hard to tell people about the cancer. But it might mean they can give you practical and emotional support. It may help to take some time to think about the benefits and disadvantages of telling people.

We have more information in our booklet **Self-employment and cancer** (see page 76). It includes details of the support available to help you continue with your business.

# Risks to people you work with

There are still misunderstandings about cancer. For example, some people worry they can catch cancer. But cancer is not infectious and there is no risk to the people you work with.

People you work with are not at risk from any treatments you have. Chemotherapy cannot harm anyone you have contact with. Radiotherapy does not make you radioactive.

People having a type of internal radiotherapy to treat thyroid cancer may have to avoid close contact with others for a few days. Your doctor or nurse will explain any precautions you need to take when you go home.

Our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00** can give you advice and support.

# If you do not want to tell people you work with

You may prefer not to tell the people you work with, or to only tell a few people. Some people want to keep this part of their life as normal as possible. If you want to keep your diagnosis private, it is important that people respect this.

Sometimes it may be hard not to tell people. This could be because of treatment side effects, such as hair loss. Or it could be because you have to take time off work to deal with tiredness (fatigue). They may know something is wrong because of your behaviour. This could make things feel uncomfortable at times. If you are not comfortable talking about it, do not feel under pressure to explain. You know what works best for you and your situation.



# TALKING WITH HEALTHCARE STAFF

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# Talking with your healthcare team

Appointments and other chances to speak with your healthcare team can be short. It is common for people to feel they are not getting the information or support they need. Sometimes you might find it hard to ask your healthcare team the right questions and remember their answers. Or you might find your mind goes blank. It can help to write down what you want to ask them and what they tell you. You can use page 89 of this booklet to do this. Bringing someone with you to your appointment can also help.

You may have questions that feel hard to talk about. Remember the healthcare professionals you speak to are used to talking to people with all sorts of issues. They are there to help.

We have more information about asking your healthcare team questions (see page 76).

**'It's like squeezing the best result out of every consultation. That's probably what I've helped to do. And laugh. We've laughed right from the beginning.'**

**Jane**

# Practical tips for talking with healthcare staff

## Plan your questions before your appointment

We have a tool on the next page that may help you think about:

- things that are going well with your cancer treatment
- things that could be better with your cancer treatment
- anything else you want to mention.

## Write down the important points

You can take these to your appointment to remind you about anything you want to ask about. You can also take notes during your appointment.

You can also record the conversation with your healthcare professional, so you can listen to it later. Make sure you let them know you are recording it.

You can also ask your healthcare team for a copy of any letters with details of your discussions. This can be useful if your family or friends ask you questions.

## Take a relative or friend with you

A relative or friend can help you remember things the health professional says. They can remind you of questions you want to ask but may forget. They can also make notes.





## Be honest and factual when describing problems

Try not to say you are feeling better than you really are. It is important that the healthcare professional knows if there are any problems. You can also talk about your emotions, including feelings of anxiety or depression. Even if your healthcare team cannot help you, they can refer you to someone who can.

## Use your own language

Your healthcare professional may use medical words, but you do not have to. Using your own words will show your healthcare team you understand what they are telling you.

## Ask for simpler explanations

It is okay to say you do not understand something your healthcare professional has said. Ask them to explain things in a simpler way.

## Say if you are embarrassed

Medical symptoms and problems can be embarrassing to talk about. But healthcare professionals are used to all kinds of questions and are happy to help.

When you start talking, you can say, 'This is embarrassing to talk about, but...'

## Make sure you understand

It is a good idea to make sure your healthcare professional knows how much you have understood. You can say things such as:

- 'You are saying that...'
- 'If I have got that right, you mean that...'

This will also encourage them to explain things more clearly if you need them to. Do not feel embarrassed to ask about anything you are unsure about.

## Remember, you will have other chances to ask questions

You could make another appointment to ask your questions if:

- you do not cover everything in the first discussion
- they give you news that changes the questions you wanted to ask.

You may also be given a phone number for a clinical nurse specialist (CNS). If you have forgotten to ask a question or if you do not understand something, you can phone them.

We have a leaflet called **Ask about your cancer treatment**, which you may find helpful (see page 76).



# Getting information

Some people want to know as much as possible about their illness. This can help them explain things to their family and friends, and help them during talks with their medical team.

Sometimes you may have a choice of treatments. In this situation, you can ask your doctor to explain all the benefits and disadvantages of each treatment. This way, you can make the right choice for you. It can help to take some time to think about your options.

We have a booklet called **Making treatment decisions** with more information, including about getting a second opinion (see page 76). You can also talk about your treatment options with our cancer support specialists by calling **0808 808 00 00**.

For some people, having more information helps them feel involved in their care and more in control. Other people prefer not to know all the details and want to leave treatment decisions to their doctors.

But you need to have a certain amount of information to be able to give consent for your treatment. It is best to tell your healthcare team how you feel, so they know how much information to give you.

Try to talk to your healthcare team about what you think and feel. This will help them focus on the issues that are important to you.

## Reliable sources of information

Sometimes you might find it hard to get all the information you need from the team looking after you.

Your doctors, nurses and other professionals are in the best position to help you and answer your questions. They have the most information about the cancer and your general health. We have more information about talking to healthcare professionals on pages 52 to 56.

There are also many other sources of support and information. Your doctor or nurse can talk to you about where to get more information. It is important to get information from a reliable source. Make sure it is up to date and relevant to your situation.

You can get reliable information from our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00** or from other organisations, including the ones listed on pages 80 to 88. These organisations often provide a helpline, booklets, online information and audio resources. You can also order printed information from Macmillan, or read our information on our website (see page 76).

Many people still believe myths about cancer. For example, they may believe cancer can never be cured. Some well-meaning people may want to tell you about bad experiences of cancer that are not relevant to your situation. If this happens, let the person know that you feel uncomfortable hearing about other people's bad experiences. You could say you would rather get the information you need from healthcare professionals.

# Problems with your healthcare team

Most people are happy with the treatment and care they get from healthcare professionals. But sometimes mistakes happen and things go wrong, which can be very upsetting.

If you are unhappy with the care you get from your healthcare team, try to talk to them about it. Say what you are unhappy with and how it affects you. This can help your healthcare team try to change the situation.

If your disagreement is about your treatment at the hospital, you can contact your local patient advocacy service. They can help sort out any problems. We have more information about making a complaint on our website. Visit [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)

# Dealing with uncertainty

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

If you understand how your progress will be measured, it may help you cope better. For example, you could ask, 'Can you see from the x-rays if the treatment is working?'.

If you are finding it hard to deal with uncertainty, try talking to family, friends and healthcare professionals about how you feel. We have tips on asking for support on pages 30 to 34.

Some people find it useful to talk about things with a counsellor. Your local cancer information centre or cancer support group may have a counsellor (see pages 15 to 16) who you can talk to. Or your doctors and nurses can help you contact one.

We have more information about dealing with uncertainty in our booklet **How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer** (see page 76).





# DEALING WITH REACTIONS

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## How people may react

When you tell someone about the cancer, the way they react may depend on different things. For example, this could include:

- what experience they have of cancer
- how well they cope with fear and anxiety.

Some people will be keen to support you. They may even want to talk about things before you are ready (see pages 20 to 21). But you may find the news makes other people uncomfortable.

'I couldn't talk openly to the Asian community, because cancer is a taboo subject. But I felt I needed to make other ladies aware. And by talking with them, my confidence has grown too.'

**Ravinder**

## Lack of experience

Many people have no experience of talking to or supporting someone with cancer. They may be unsure about what you need and too embarrassed to ask. You may have to start the conversation.

## Fear of your reaction

People may worry about how you will react if they start talking about the cancer. They might be scared of upsetting you. Or they may worry they will not know what to do if you cry or get upset. If you are open and talk about your situation and feelings, you can tell people what support you need.

## Sharing stories

Many people know someone who has had cancer. Some people may share stories with you that you find negative or upsetting. It is okay to tell them you do not want to hear that kind of story right now.

## Avoidance

People may not know what to say, but may feel that they should know. This might mean they avoid you or do not say much. This can be hurtful and disappointing.

Other people may only be able to talk about things they think are helpful and positive. If you need to talk about your fears, this can be frustrating.

You may find other people go into denial. They may cope with the situation by pretending it is not happening. This can be upsetting when you need their support.

## More information

We have more information about the different feelings you may experience when you are diagnosed with cancer in our booklet **How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer** (see page 76).

You can also visit [healthtalk.org](https://www.healthtalk.org) to watch videos of people talking about their cancer experiences and how they coped with other people's reactions.

# Practical tips for dealing with reactions

## Acknowledge their feelings

Remember the person cares about you. But they may be struggling to accept the cancer or may not know the best way to help. When you are trying to cope with cancer yourself, you might feel resentful about having to deal with their feelings. But try not to push them away or ignore their feelings. This is likely to make things worse.

## Try to respond

Recognising how someone feels can help identify their emotion and what caused it. You could say:

- 'When I talk about the cancer, you look really upset.'
- 'I know you are feeling very helpless and taking control is your way of coping, but...'

## Do not be afraid to say how you feel too

For example, you may say:

- 'I think both of us are finding this awful.'
- 'I know you are worried about what could happen and so am I.'

The more aware you are of each other's feelings, the better the communication will be. Arguments are common. Our information about managing disagreements (see pages 71 to 73) can help.

## Try not to compete

Reminding the other person that you feel worse can make them feel like you are not acknowledging their feelings.

## If a person is avoiding talking, gently ask them to listen

Tell them they do not need to respond right now, but you would just like them to listen. We have practical tips about talking and asking for support on pages 30 to 34.

## Ask to have a break from talking

Ask to have a break from talking if:

- you feel you are being forced to talk before you are ready
- you are finding the conversation difficult to deal with.

You can come back to the conversation later. We have information that might help if you do not want to talk (see pages 20 to 21).

Some people may not be able to support you in the way you would like. They might need more time to deal with their own feelings. You may have to accept they cannot help, and find other sources of support. We have details of other people and organisations you can talk to on pages 80 to 88.

## Talk about everyday things

Some people may find it hard to talk about your illness, or they may react in a way that is not helpful. If this happens, you may just want to talk about day-to-day issues. This can also be useful, as it gives you time to talk about things other than cancer.

## Tips for your family and friends

Your family and friends may find it useful to visit our Online Community at [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community) It has a group for family and friends to share experiences and feelings. They can also get support from other people in a similar situation.





# Managing disagreements

When dealing with cancer, people are often worried and nervous. This means arguments can happen. You may not always agree with your family, friends, colleagues or members of your healthcare team. But there are ways you can try to manage any disagreements.

## **Try to describe your feelings rather than acting on them**

For example, try saying you feel angry instead of shouting.

## **Try to accept emotions**

Remember your family and friends may have strong feelings too. Try to accept those feelings as well as your own.

## **Remember you do not have to agree**

If you cannot agree on an issue, you can 'agree to disagree'.

## **Do not assume you know what the other person thinks or wants**

Ask them how they are feeling instead.

## Let the other person talk about how they feel

You should both have time to talk, even if you disagree.

## Avoid 'all or nothing' words, such as 'always' and 'never'

For example, try not to say:

- 'You never listen to me.'
- 'I always call you.'

These words may make the other person defensive.

## Avoid criticising someone's character

Say how their actions made you feel instead. For example, try not to say, 'You are thoughtless. I have to remember everything.' Instead, try saying, 'I feel overwhelmed and stressed when I have a lot to remember.'

## Talk about the issue with someone else

You may find a solution by hearing what someone else thinks about it.

## Try to see the other person's side of the argument

They may feel bad about the conflict, and seeing this may help you feel less angry.

## **Write down some of your feelings**

This can help you make sense of things.

## **Contact a counselling service**

If you are unhappy about your relationship with people close to you, it may help to talk to a counsellor. We have more information about counselling on pages 15 to 16.

## **If you feel very angry**

Many of these arguments can be sorted out with time. But some people find themselves getting very angry with others. If you feel anger is a problem for you, talk to your healthcare team about the help available.



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# 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 booklets or leaflets like this one. Visit [be.macmillan.org.uk](https://www.be.macmillan.org.uk) or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

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

## Online information

All our information is also available online at [macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support) You can also find videos featuring 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](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/otherformats)

If you would like us to produce information in a different format for you, email us at [cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk) or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

# 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**

## 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** 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.

## Other useful organisations

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

### **Counselling, bereavement and emotional support**

#### **Association for Family Therapy & Systemic Practice (AFT)**

**Tel** 01925 444414

**www.aft.org.uk**

Promotes effective family therapy, systemic services and high standards of professional training and practice. Search for a family therapist on the website.

#### **Barnardo's**

**Tel** 0208 550 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.

#### **British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)**

**Tel** 01455 883 300

**Email** bacp@bacp.co.uk

**www.bacp.co.uk**

Promotes awareness of counselling and signposts people to appropriate services throughout the UK. You can search for a qualified counsellor on the website

#### **Childhood Bereavement Network**

**Tel** 0207 843 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 you can search for local services.

**Cruse Bereavement Care****Tel** 0808 808 1677**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 Hope Again website for young people, which includes information and forums where visitors can share their experiences. Visit **hopeagain.org.uk**

**Hope Support Services****Tel** 0198 956 6317**Email** help@

hopesupportservices.org.uk

**www.hopesupportservices.org.uk**

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

**Relate****Email**

relate.enquiries@relate.org.uk

**www.relate.org.uk**

Offers advice, relationship counselling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and more.

**Relationships Scotland****Infoline** 0345 119 2020

(Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 4.30pm)

**Email** enquiries@relationships-scotland.org.uk**www.relationships-scotland.org.uk**

Provides relationship counselling, mediation and family support across Scotland.

**Samaritans****Helpline** 116 123 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)**Email** jo@samaritans.org**www.samaritans.org**

Samaritans branches are located across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Provides confidential, non-judgemental emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those that could lead to suicide.

### **UK Council for**

### **Psychotherapy**

**Tel** 0207 014 9955

**Email** [info@ukcp.org.uk](mailto:info@ukcp.org.uk)

**[www.psychotherapy.org.uk](http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk)**

Holds the national register of psychotherapists, psychotherapeutic counsellors and listening practitioners.

### **Winston's Wish**

**Tel** 08088 020 021

### **Email**

[info@winstonswish.org.uk](mailto:info@winstonswish.org.uk)

**[www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://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.

### **Youth Access**

**Tel** 0208 772 9900

(Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm)

### **Email**

[admin@youthaccess.org.uk](mailto:admin@youthaccess.org.uk)

**[www.youthaccess.org.uk](http://www.youthaccess.org.uk)**

National membership organisation for young people's information, advice, counselling and support services (YIACS). Find your local Youth Access service via the website.

### **LGBT-specific support**

#### **LGBT Foundation**

**Tel** 0345 330 3030 (Mon to Fri, 9am to 9pm)

**Email** [helpline@lgbt.foundation](mailto:helpline@lgbt.foundation)

**[www.lgbt.foundation](http://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.

## General cancer support organisations

### Cancer Black Care

**Tel** 0208 961 4151

**Email** info@

cancerblackcare.org.uk

**www.cancerblackcare.org.uk**

Offers UK-wide information and support 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, including a free helpline, counselling and links to local support groups.

### Cancer Research UK

**Helpline** 0808 800 4040

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)

**www.cancerresearchuk.org**

A UK-wide organisation that has patient information on all types of cancer. Also has a clinical trials database.

### Cancer Support Scotland

**Tel** 0800 652 4531

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)

**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.

### 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 various 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 3000 118

(Mon to Fri, 10am to 2pm)

**Email**

info@pennybrohn.org.uk

**www.pennybrohn.org.uk**

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

### **Riprap**

**www.riprap.org.uk**

Developed especially for teenagers in the UK who have a parent with cancer. Has an online forum where teenagers going through similar experiences can talk to each other for support.

### **Tenovus**

**Helpline** 0808 808 1010

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm,  
and Sat to Sun, 10am to 1pm)

**www.tenovuscancercare.org.uk**

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

### **General health information**

#### **GP Out-of-Hours Service – Northern Ireland**

A support service for medical help and advice. Lines open weekdays, 6pm until your GP surgery opens the next morning, open 24 hours Sat to Sun and bank holidays.

#### **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust**

North and West Belfast

**Tel** 028 9074 4447

**Textphone**

18001 028 90744447

South and East Belfast

**Tel** 028 9079 6220

**Textphone**

18001 028 90796220

**Dalriada Urgent Care**

**Tel** 028 2566 3500

**Textphone**

18001 028 2566 3500

**South Eastern Health  
and Social Care Trust**

Aards and North Down

**Tel** 028 9182 2344

**Textphone**

18001 028 90744447

Lisburn and Downpatrick

**Tel** 028 9260 2204

**Textphone**

18001 028 92602204

**Southern Health and  
Social Care Trust**

**Tel** 028 3839 9201

**Textphone**

18001 028 38399201

**Western Urgent Care**

**Tel** 028 7186 5195

**Textphone**

18001 028 71865195

**Health and Social Care  
in Northern Ireland**

**[www.hscni.net](http://www.hscni.net)**

Provides information about health and social care services in Northern Ireland.

**Healthtalk**

**Email**

[info@healthtalk.org](mailto:info@healthtalk.org)

**[www.healthtalk.org](http://www.healthtalk.org)**

**[www.healthtalk.org/young-peoples-experiences](http://www.healthtalk.org/young-peoples-experiences) (site for young people)**

Has information about cancer, and videos and audio clips of people's experiences.

Also provides advice on topics such as making decisions about health and treatment.

**NHS.UK**

**[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

The UK's biggest health information website. Has service information for England.

**NHS Direct Wales**

**[www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk)**

NHS health information site for Wales.

## **NHS Inform**

**Helpline** 0800 22 44 88  
(7 days a week, 8am to 8pm)

**www.nhsinform.scot**

NHS health information site for Scotland.

## **Patient UK**

**www.patient.info**

Provides people in the UK with information about health and disease. Includes evidence-based information leaflets on a wide variety of medical and health topics. Also reviews and links to many health- and illness-related websites.

## **Financial or legal advice and information**

### **Advice NI**

**Helpline** 0800 915 4604

**Email** [advice@adviceni.net](mailto:advice@adviceni.net)

Provides advice on a variety of issues including financial, legal, housing and employment issues.

## **Benefit Enquiry Line**

### **Northern Ireland**

**Helpline** 0800 232 1271  
(Mon, Tue, Wed and Fri, 9am to 5pm, Thu, 10am to 5pm)

**Textphone** 0289 031 1092

**www.nidirect.gov.uk/  
money-tax-and-benefits**

Provides information and advice about disability benefits and carers' benefits in Northern Ireland.

## **Citizens Advice**

Provides advice on a variety of issues including financial, legal, housing and employment issues. Use their online webchat or find details for your local office by contacting:

### **England**

**Helpline** 0800 144 8848

**www.citizensadvice.org.uk**

### **Scotland**

**Helpline** 0800 028 1456

**www.cas.org.uk**

### **Wales**

**Helpline** 0800 702 2020

**www.citizensadvice.org.uk/  
wales**



**Civil Legal Advice****Helpline** 0345 345 4345(Mon to Fri, 9am to 8pm,  
Sat, 9am to 12.30pm)**Minicom** 0345 609 6677**[www.gov.uk/  
civil-legal-advice](http://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice)**

Has a list of legal advice centres in England and Wales and solicitors that take legal aid cases. Offers a free translation service if English isn't your first language.

**Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)****Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Helpline**

0345 850 3322

**Textphone** 0345 601 6677

(Mon to Fri, 8am to 6pm)

**Carer's Allowance Unit****Tel** 0800 731 0297**Textphone** 0800 731 0317

(Mon to Fri, 8am to 6pm)

**[www.gov.uk/carers-allowance-unit](http://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance-unit)**

Manages state benefits in England, Scotland and Wales. You can apply for benefits and find information online or through its helplines.

**GOV.UK****[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)**

Has information about social security benefits and public services in England, Scotland and Wales.

**Money Advice Scotland****Tel** 0141 572 0237**Email** [info@moneyadvice-scotland.org.uk](mailto:info@moneyadvice-scotland.org.uk)**[www.moneyadvicescotland.org.uk](http://www.moneyadvicescotland.org.uk)**

Use the website to find qualified financial advisers in Scotland.

**National Debtline (England, Wales and Scotland)****Tel** 0808 808 4000(Mon to Fri, 9am to 8pm,  
Sat, 9.30am to 1pm)**[www.nationaldebtline.org](http://www.nationaldebtline.org)**

A national helpline for people with debt problems. The service is free, confidential and independent. Has an online chat service with an expert debt advisor.

**NiDirect****[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)**

Has information about benefits and public services in Northern Ireland.

**Personal Finance Society –  
'Find an Adviser' service**  
**www.thepfs.org/yourmoney/  
find-an-adviser**

Use the website to find qualified financial advisers in your area of the UK.

**The Money Advice Service  
Helpline**

0800 138 7777 (English)  
0800 138 0555 (Welsh)  
(Mon to Fri, 8am to 8pm,  
Sat, 9am to 1pm)

**Typetalk**

18001 0300 500 5000

**Email** enquiries@  
moneyadviceservice.org.uk  
**www.moneyadviceservice.  
org.uk**

Runs a free financial health check service and gives advice about all types of financial matters across the UK. Has an online chat service for instant money advice.

**Unbiased.co.uk**

**Helpline** 0800 023 6868

**Email** contact@unbiased.co.uk

**www.unbiased.co.uk**

You can search the website for qualified advisers in the UK who can give expert advice about finances, mortgages, accounting or legal issues.



## 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.

## 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, Consultant Medical Oncologist and Macmillan Chief Medical Editor.

With thanks to: Diana Borthwick, Clinical Nurse Specialist; Jamie Cargill, Lead Nurse, Teenage and Young Adult Cancer; Shirley Crofts, Clinical Nurse Specialist and Clinical Psychologist; Liz Egan, Macmillan Working Through Cancer Programme Lead; Dr Joy Hall PhD, Psychosexual and Relationship Therapist; Elaine Heywood, Macmillan Counsellor; Darren McKinley, Teenage and Young Adults Project Manager, Teenage Cancer Trust; Helen Moorey, Clinical Nurse Specialist; Michelle Pengelly, Supportive Care Lead Nurse; and Dr Louise Robinson, Consultant Clinical Psychologist.

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

## Sources

We have used a number of sources in this publication. If you would like further information about the sources we use, please contact us at **[cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk)**

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

# 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](http://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

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Signature

Date

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## 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](https://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 about talking with people when you have cancer. It is for anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer.

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The booklet explains why it is important to talk about cancer and who you might want to talk with. It also has practical tips for having a conversation. We have other booklets for carers, friends and family.

We're here to help everyone with cancer live life as fully as they can, providing physical, financial and emotional support. So whatever cancer throws your way, we're right there with you. 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.

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

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