

A practical guide to living  
with and after cancer

# HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

The emotional effects of cancer

**WE ARE  
MACMILLAN.  
CANCER SUPPORT**

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# About this booklet

**When you're told you have cancer, it is common to feel overwhelmed by different feelings. You may feel shocked, numb and unable to believe what's going on. You may feel as though the situation is happening to someone else, or that you are watching yourself from the outside.**

Being diagnosed with cancer is a life-changing experience for most people. It can have a huge effect on your emotions, as well as on the practical aspects of your life. You may experience fear, anger, sadness, loneliness or depression. You may have these feelings at the time of diagnosis, during treatment, or when you're recovering and adjusting to life after treatment.

Some people's thoughts and fears may be based on past experiences of relatives or friends having cancer many years ago. But cancer treatments now are more effective, and more people are surviving or living with cancer than ever before.

In this booklet we discuss some of the common feelings that people with cancer may have, and we look at what may help. We also suggest exercises for you to do, which you may find helpful.

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

Throughout this booklet we've included quotes from people with cancer. Some are from the website **healthtalk.org** and others are taken from our online community, which you can visit at **macmillan.org.uk/community**

At the end of this booklet are some useful addresses and websites (see pages 83–88).

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

We have separate resources for young people affected by cancer, including our booklet *I'm still me: a guide for young people affected by cancer*.

It can also be very hard for partners, relatives and friends when someone close to them has been diagnosed with cancer. They may not know what to say or how they can help. They may also have difficult feelings to cope with. Our booklet *When someone close to you has cancer* is a resource for family members and friends. It looks at the effect cancer may have on different relationships.



# CANCER AND YOUR FEELINGS

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## **A diagnosis of cancer means you will have to deal with issues and situations that may be very frightening and challenging.**

Common fears and thoughts about cancer include:

- ‘I don’t want to lose my independence and freedom’
- ‘I don’t want my family or friends to treat me differently’
- ‘I don’t know how I’ll cope financially’
- ‘I might miss out on a promotion or lose important work contacts’
- ‘I may have to make big changes to my lifestyle’
- ‘I may die’.

These are likely to be very real concerns for you and those close to you. When life feels uncertain, it can help to talk about your hopes and fears. It’s fine to worry about and be upset by them. And it’s fine to cry and say how you feel when things get tough.

On pages 14–21 we discuss the benefits of talking about your feelings, and on pages 83–88 there are details of organisations that can offer support.

Most people feel overwhelmed when they are told they have cancer. There is no right or wrong way to feel – reactions vary and people have different emotions at different times.

You will probably have a variety of emotions, which may cause confusion and frequent mood swings. These changing emotions are part of the process many people go through when dealing with their illness.

'Cancer can turn your life upside down. You can experience just about every emotion a human being can feel – a real rollercoaster of ups and downs – often in a very short space of time.'

**Iain**

Over the next few pages, we discuss some of the common feelings people may have after they've been diagnosed with cancer. And later in this booklet we discuss some of the different ways of managing these feelings.

## **Shock and disbelief**

When your doctor tells you that you have cancer, you may find it hard to believe. It's common to feel shocked and numb. You may not be able to take in much information and find that you keep asking the same questions again and again.

At first, you might find it hard to talk to family and friends about the cancer. This usually gets easier as the shock wears off and it becomes more real to you.

You may find you can't think or talk about anything but the cancer. This is because your mind is trying to process what you're going through.

## **Fear and anxiety**

People can be very anxious or frightened about whether treatment will work and what will happen in the future. This uncertainty can be one of the hardest things to cope with. We talk more about fear and anxiety on pages 30–35.



## Avoidance

Some people cope by not wanting to know very much about the cancer and by not talking about it. If you feel like this, let your family and friends know that you don't want to talk about it right now. You can also tell your doctor if there are things you don't want to know or talk about yet.

**'I often just want to hide under the duvet. I think it's understandable and acceptable that we should feel like this, given the hard journey we are facing.'**

**Alwyn**

Sometimes, avoidance is the other way around. Family and friends may be reluctant to talk to you and may even avoid you. They may seem like they don't want to talk about your cancer, or they might change the subject when you try to. This is usually because they are also finding the cancer difficult to cope with, and they may need support too. Try to let them know how this makes you feel and that talking openly with them about your illness will help you. If they still cannot give you the support you need, there are organisations on pages 83–87 that can help both you and them.

## Anger

You may feel angry about your illness and sometimes resent other people for being well. These are normal reactions, especially when you feel frightened, stressed, out of control or unwell. You may get angry with the people close to you. Let them know you are angry at your illness and not at them.

## Guilt and blame

Some people feel guilty or blame themselves or others for the cancer. You may try to find reasons for why it has happened to you. Most of the time, it's impossible to know exactly what has caused a person's cancer. Over time, several different factors may act together to cause a cancer. Doctors don't fully understand all of these factors yet. Instead of trying to find reasons, try to focus on looking after yourself and getting the help and support you need.

## Feeling alone

Some people feel alone or that they don't have enough support. Family and friends may live far away, have other commitments or feel uncomfortable because of their own fears about cancer. We talk more about what you can do if you feel lonely and isolated on pages 24–27.

## Loss of control and independence

One of the hardest things to cope with can be the feeling that the cancer and its treatment have taken over your life, and that you've lost control.

Cancer may take over certain aspects of your life, but there are often things you can do to help. We explain these further on pages 60–69.

'I found that I felt a bit better when my plan was in place and the fight had begun!'

**Alwyn**

## Loss of confidence

Cancer and its treatments can change a person's role in their family or at work. You may not have the physical energy to do the normal, everyday tasks that you did before, such as going to work or doing jobs around the house. Things you used to find easy may now be much more difficult. These things plus the sense of no longer having control over your life may cause you to lose some confidence.

## Sorrow and sadness

It's natural to feel sad after cancer has been diagnosed. This feeling may be there a lot of the time, or it may come and go.

Cancer can often mean making changes that affect different areas of your life. As a result, you may feel sad that your future may not be as you had planned. You might need to grieve for this.

## Withdrawal

There may be times when you want to be left alone to sort out your thoughts and emotions. This is a very normal reaction for some people.

However, if you find that you would rather be on your own for long periods of time and avoid talking to other people, this could be a sign that you're depressed. See pages 38–43 for more information about depression and what can help.

There may be times when you feel too tired and helpless to think about what could help. You will have good days and bad days, and it's important for you and your family to realise this. Over time, people usually find things they can do to help them feel better.

## Feelings about advanced cancer

If you have been told your cancer is advanced, you may feel shocked and find it hard to take in. You may feel frightened about the future, or angry with other people or yourself. With time, these feelings can become more manageable as you start making decisions and plans.

Although it is rare for advanced cancer to be cured, people may live with it for a long time – sometimes for years. During this time, many people carry on with their day-to-day lives and doing things that are important to them.

'I think it would be impossible to honestly say you are not affected by someone telling you that you have an incurable condition. I actually seem to be worse when things are going well and I forget about the cancer, and then an appointment comes through. The day before I'm due to go to the hospital, I'm a wreck. I think, as with many things, you just have to accept it. Don't count the days – make the days count.'

**Daren**



Our booklet *Coping with advanced cancer* has more information and suggestions to help you manage difficult feelings.



# TALKING ABOUT CANCER

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**After being diagnosed with cancer, you may find the idea of talking to family and friends upsetting or uncomfortable. It may take you some time to come to terms with your diagnosis. Trying to put how you are feeling into words may feel overwhelming. But it can help you make the right decisions and feel supported.**

Lots of people don't like talking about their own needs, because they don't want to seem needy, demanding or attention-seeking. Or they may feel the need to protect other people from being upset by their news.

However, there will often be relatives and friends who really want to help. Try starting a conversation with them and saying what you need – even if you just want them to listen to you. You may be surprised at how willing they are to support you. By asking for someone else's support, it shows that you value them. Often they will feel happy knowing that you're comfortable enough to talk to them about what's on your mind.

## **The benefits of talking**

It can feel so difficult to talk about cancer that you may think, 'Should I bother?' or, 'Is it worth talking about it if it makes my friends feel uncomfortable?' But talking can help you cope with any uncertainties or difficulties that may lie ahead. It can support you and give you some control over your situation.

## How talking can give you support

Putting things into words helps us make sense of them and leaves us feeling more in control of them. Generally speaking, people take comfort in talking. Discussing fears or concerns often helps us understand them better and put them into perspective. Talking about our feelings can also make us feel less anxious.

For example, you may have unanswered questions and find it difficult to make up your mind about some issues. But by talking the situation through, you may realise that you can find the answer or make a particular decision.

Talking about a fear or worry often stops it from growing bigger in our minds. Often when we're thinking about something all the time, we worry about it more and more. Once the fear is out in the open and being discussed, this process often stops. We can also use talking to help us rehearse a difficult conversation we know we need to have.

Finally, talking about something important or personal creates a bond between people, and this can make you feel appreciated and supported.

'At first I felt guilty talking about it, because I didn't want to be a burden. 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.'

**Tess**



## Why it can be difficult to talk about cancer

Many people used to see cancer as something that shouldn't be talked about. But things have changed a lot, and cancer is now widely talked and written about in magazines, on TV and on the radio.

However, there are several reasons why you may still find it difficult to talk about your cancer:

- You may be afraid that you'll lose control of your feelings, or that the person you are talking to will. You may feel you need to stay strong for the sake of other people.
- Some people may never have had a serious illness themselves or known anyone who has. They may be unsure of what you want and need, or how to ask you.
- Your family and friends may find it difficult to talk about your cancer because they are also struggling to accept your illness. They may avoid you altogether, and this can be upsetting at a time when you need their support. In most cases, their feelings will change over time and they will be able to talk to you. However, if they can't, you may have to accept that this is their way of dealing with things.
- You may feel your healthcare team are too busy to talk about your feelings, or that it is not their area of expertise. But starting a discussion with your doctor about how you are feeling can be helpful. Even if they cannot help you themselves, they should refer you to someone who can help.

It can be difficult to talk about cancer for any of these reasons. But being open and talking about your situation and feelings will let people know what support you may need. You can learn to judge reactions and see who is willing to talk to you and be supportive.

## Asking for support

When you're asking someone for support, you may find the following suggestions helpful:

- Feel free to talk about day-to-day things. Having cancer doesn't mean you're not allowed to talk about anything else. Many people find it helpful to talk about everyday life as well as major issues they're facing, so there's no need to feel limited.
- Let the person know you want to talk about issues related to your cancer. This lets them know that what you're about to say is important to you.
- Think about which issues are most important to you. You may feel like there's 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.
- If you want to talk about something that's worrying you, try to tell the person what it is in particular. You may find it easier to narrow down what's worrying you 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'. This can make it easier to then focus on particular problems.
- If you've been worrying about something a lot, let the person you're talking to know. This helps them understand how important the issue is to you, and they can focus on that.
- Asking the other person whether they understand may help you feel like you're being listened to. You could use any phrase you like to do this, such as, 'Do you see what I mean?' or, 'Does that make sense to you?' If you've agreed that you or they will do something after the conversation, you may also want to sum up what's been agreed at the end of the conversation.

- After you've spoken about important topics, don't feel embarrassed going back to small talk. You don't have to discuss serious issues all the time. Chatting about everyday things can also help you feel like normal life is still going on.

'I didn't want everything to be about me and the illness. Sometimes I just wanted to talk about normal things. It also helped take my mind off it.'

**Tess**

### **Telling people how they can support you**

You may like to use the table on the opposite page to write down how your family and friends could help you. Sharing this with people close to you may help them support you in the way you need.

The table is a person-centred thinking tool, taken from **thinkaboutyourlife.org**, which was developed by cancer survivors. The website has examples, stories and support to help you use the tool.



## Humour

People are often unsure about whether they should use humour when talking about difficult subjects. This is a personal thing and depends very much on how you and the people close to you usually interact with each other.

You may find it helpful to use humour in some situations. However, you don't want your family or healthcare team to think you don't understand the seriousness of the situation. Humour can be a useful way of coping, as it can make situations less frightening. Use your judgement to decide when it would be appropriate to use humour, and when it may upset the people close to you.

If joking about things has been part of the way you've coped with challenging things in the past, it may help you now. But if you haven't used humour in this way in the past, it may be less helpful.



Our booklet *Talking about your cancer* has more information about speaking to people about your cancer, and understanding their responses. We also have a booklet called *Lost for words: how to talk to someone with cancer* that has advice for family and friends.

## If you don't want to talk

Some people don't want to talk about their thoughts or feelings, or about their cancer and its treatment. They would rather just get on with life, and they find that doing normal everyday things and not discussing the cancer is the best way for them to cope.

While you may not want to talk about your cancer, remember that the people you care about may want to. Try to be open and honest with your family and friends. Let them know that it's hard for you to talk and there may be a limit to how much you feel able to share.

You may also want time with your family and friends when you don't talk about your cancer, for example if you're going out somewhere to enjoy yourselves. In this situation, don't be afraid to say that you'd rather not talk about your cancer today or that you'll bring up the issue if you want to discuss it.



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**It's common for anyone affected by cancer to feel lonely or isolated. These feelings can happen at any stage of the illness: at the time of diagnosis, or during or after treatment.**

There are many reasons why you might feel alone. It may be because you feel like no one understands what you're going through, or that other people are trying to be so positive that you can't say what you genuinely feel. Or it may be that your appearance has changed as a result of the cancer or its treatment. For example, some cancer treatments can cause hair loss or weight loss. These changes can add to your sense of being isolated and different from those around you. You can feel lonely even if you're surrounded by people close to you.

The sense of isolation can be made worse if you find it difficult to talk about your situation. It can be hard to tell your family and friends how you really feel, as you may want to protect them from a distressing conversation. You may tell them you're fine even when you're not. You might find yourself giving people other reasons for not being yourself, such as, 'I'm just feeling tired'.

You may find that the less you talk about it, the more the cancer becomes all you think about, and the more alone you feel. Finding the courage to talk to just one person can be the first step towards helping you feel better.

## If you live alone

If you live by yourself, you can feel even more alone and unsure of who to turn to. You may also have practical things to sort out. For example, you may need to work out who will look after your pet when you're in hospital, or how you will do everyday tasks like shopping when you're back at home.

Some people have family and friends who live nearby. But if you don't have anyone near you, it may be hard to know where to get help. You may find it helpful to join a local cancer support group, where you can meet people in a similar situation (see page 67).

The internet has become a common way of socialising and keeping in touch with people. There are a number of online groups for people affected by cancer (see page ).

Some people find they feel less alone after seeing someone in a similar position with tips and advice on how to cope. Cancer Stories is a free online collection of real life stories showing how people coped with their cancer. Visit **cancerstories.info** to watch videos of people affected by cancer. We also have lots of videos of people talking about their cancer experience. You can watch them all at **youtube.com/macmillancancer**



## What may help

There are things you can do to help you feel less isolated and also help you manage your emotions. These may include:

- talking to family and friends
- joining a self-help and support group (see page 67)
- finding online support
- speaking to healthcare professionals.

Different things work for different people, so you may need to try a few to see what you find the most helpful. We discuss the benefits of talking about your cancer on pages 14–21. And we explain other things you can do to help yourself on pages 60–69.

You can use our online community to talk to people in our chat rooms, blog your journey, make friends and join support groups. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)

'Talk to your friends. Talk to fellow sufferers. Talk to survivors. Talk to organisations like Macmillan who know how to help.'

Iain



# FEAR AND ANXIETY

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**Feeling frightened and anxious is a natural reaction to an uncertain situation. Cancer is a serious illness, so it's normal to worry about what will happen in the months or years ahead. You may feel overwhelmed with information about treatment options, possible side effects, and changes to your family and work life. You may be struggling to take all the information in and feel worried about making important decisions.**

You may also be scared about the body changes that cancer treatment can cause. Whether these changes are temporary or permanent, they can affect your self-image and confidence. You may feel vulnerable if you can no longer do everything you used to do.

We have a booklet called *Body image and cancer* that explains how cancer treatment can affect the way you see your body. It suggests ways of dealing with these thoughts and feelings.

Talking about your fears or concerns can often help. Discussing them with someone can help you understand them better and put them into perspective. It can also help you make important decisions. This can leave you feeling more in control of your situation and less fearful. We discuss the benefits of talking about your cancer on page 14 and give some suggestions to help you discuss difficult topics.

## Uncertainty

Feeling that we have some control over our lives gives us a sense of security and allows us to enjoy the things we do. It's natural to want to know what is likely to happen to us next, so that we can make plans for the future. But being diagnosed with cancer can take away that sense of security, and leave you feeling uncertain about what's ahead.

Uncertainty can be one of the hardest feelings to deal with, and it may make you feel irritable, angry and frightened.

Some people find it helps to find out as much as possible about their illness and what is likely to happen. This can help reduce feelings of stress, although not everyone feels this way. However, by talking through your fears, you may find the situation is better than you first thought. It's best to discuss this with your doctors and nurses, as they know your situation and are involved in your treatment.

Try to be clear with your doctor or nurse about how much you want to know about your illness. You could write down a list of the questions you want to ask before you see them.

You may find that doctors can't answer your questions fully, or that their answers sound vague. For example, it's often impossible for them to say for certain how effective a treatment will be. Doctors know approximately how many people will benefit from a treatment, but can't predict the future for a particular person with certainty.

Many people find this uncertainty hard to live with. On pages 60–69, we discuss things you can do to help you manage your feelings.



We have a video on our website about coping with uncertainty. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/uncertainty](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/uncertainty)





## Anxiety

It is natural to feel anxious when you have been diagnosed with cancer. But some people may have strong feelings of anxiety that are more difficult to manage. You may find that you can't concentrate, are irritable and easily distracted, sleep badly and get tired easily. These feelings may be there all the time, or they may come and go.

You may also experience some uncomfortable physical changes if you have anxiety. These can include tense muscles, breathlessness, dizziness, sweating or a dry mouth.

Reassurance from family and friends that 'everything will be alright' can sometimes make the anxiety worse. You may feel they do not take your concerns seriously. Or they may be struggling to accept your illness. Talking to someone who can listen to your fears objectively can be a great help. This may be your doctor, your nurse, a family member, a friend or a professional counsellor. Finding the right support and information may greatly reduce your anxiety.

If you feel that your anxiety is getting worse, speak to your GP or specialist nurse, or to a counsellor or psychologist. They can help you look at the reasons for the fear and find ways of coping with it. You may also find it helpful to contact Anxiety UK (see page 83).

Many people who have anxiety may also have depression. We discuss depression on pages 38–43.

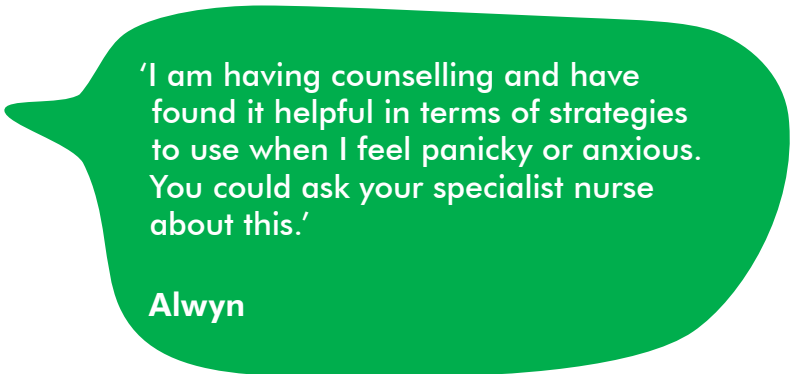


The book *Coping with the psychological effects of cancer* (2010) gives practical advice on how to cope with difficult feelings. It is written by R Bor, C Erikson and C Stapelkamp, published by Sheldon Press and is available for £7.99.

## Panic attacks

If you're very anxious then you may have a panic attack. This is a sudden and intense feeling of fear, along with physical symptoms of anxiety such as sweaty palms and a fast heartbeat. Panic attacks can feel overwhelming, but there are ways to help control them.

Techniques to help you manage panic attacks include breathing exercises and visualisation. You can read more about relaxation and visualisation in our booklet *Cancer and complementary therapies*.



'I am having counselling and have found it helpful in terms of strategies to use when I feel panicky or anxious. You could ask your specialist nurse about this.'

**Alwyn**

## Hopes and fears

You may like to use the person-centred thinking tool on the opposite page to write down your hopes and fears. This might help you talk to other people about what is frightening you. Even if you don't want to share it with other people, you may still find it useful to write down your hopes and fears. There's also space for you to think about the next steps you could take that may help you manage your concerns.

The person-centred thinking tool is from **[thinkaboutyourlife.org](http://thinkaboutyourlife.org)**, which was developed by cancer survivors. The website has examples, stories and support to help you use the tool.



Hopes



Fears

**Next steps**



# DEPRESSION

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**When you have been diagnosed with cancer, you may feel very low at times. This may be at the time of diagnosis, or during or after treatment. For some people, their low mood may continue or get worse, and they may need professional help or treatment.**

Sometimes, it can be difficult to know whether you're depressed or not. It may be other people who notice symptoms and suggest that you might need help.

Depression is a common condition that affects around 1 in 10 people (10%). It can be triggered by a variety of difficult events, including a cancer diagnosis or having treatment for cancer. However, it can also happen by chance or be related to other events that have nothing to do with cancer.

Symptoms of depression include:

- having a very low mood most of the time
- feeling fatigued or lacking in energy
- getting no pleasure out of life or activities you usually enjoy
- crying a lot, or feeling unable to cry
- having difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- being unusually irritable or impatient
- waking up early, having difficulty sleeping, or sleeping more than usual

- feeling less affectionate or having a loss of sexual desire
- hallucinations or hearing voices (although this is rare).

These are just some of the symptoms of depression, but they will be different for each person. If you have other symptoms but think you may be depressed, talk to your doctor or nurse.

## Who is most likely to develop depression?

Some people are more likely to develop depression than others. These include people who:

- have had depression before
- have a family member who has suffered from depression
- have no one to discuss things with (so it can help to talk about how you feel with your cancer team at an early stage)
- have a lot of other concerns or difficulties to deal with at the same time as they are coping with cancer
- are being treated with certain drugs that may cause depression in some people.



## Dealing with depression

The relationship between cancer and depression is complicated.

A diagnosis of cancer often involves some sort of loss, for example the loss of future plans or a loss of income. It is natural and healthy to feel low for a time as a result of loss.

Depression is not a sign of personal failure or an inability to cope. There is no need for you to feel guilty about feeling depressed or not feeling positive all the time. It is important to remember that depression is common, and that it can usually be treated successfully. The first step to feeling better is finding appropriate help.

There are things you can do to help yourself (see pages 60–69). But if you think you need professional help, speak to your doctor or nurse. They may refer you to a specialist or prescribe medication.

There are also organisations that can help people with depression (see pages 83–86).



We have a video about coping with depression on our website. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/depression](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/depression)

Although it may feel like it's unlikely you will recover from depression, remember that it won't continue forever. Even if you have no treatment, there's a good chance that eventually your mood will improve. Self-help techniques, talking therapies or antidepressant medication can all help speed up your recovery. We discuss these over the next few pages.

## Getting professional help

Your doctor might want to refer you to see a **psychiatrist** or **clinical psychologist**. These are people with special expertise in helping people who are depressed (see pages 73–74). They will want to know how the depression developed, how it is affecting you, and any treatments you have tried so far. They will then be able to suggest other ways of managing the depression, possibly including medicines. You may need several visits, or after your first visit they may recommend that you see another member of the team instead, such as a **counsellor** (see page 73).

'After speaking to the psychologist at Macmillan, I realised that I wasn't on my own with this. It was all explained to me very, very clearly. That it would go away. And I'm feeling lots better due to the advice that I've had.'

**Alfie**

## Antidepressant medicines

Some people will be prescribed an antidepressant to help lift their mood.

There are different types of antidepressant, and your doctors may need to try more than one to find the type that suits you best. They take effect slowly, which means you will not usually notice much improvement in your symptoms until at least 2–4 weeks after you start treatment.

Most people need to take antidepressants for at least six months to help them through their depression. Antidepressants are not addictive, but if you stop taking them suddenly, it may cause unpleasant symptoms. When stopping antidepressants, it is important you follow your doctor's advice and don't stop taking them suddenly.

Like all other medicines, antidepressants have side effects. However, these are usually mild. They tend to be more of a problem during the first few weeks of treatment. The side effects of antidepressants include a dry mouth, drowsiness, feeling sick (nausea), sleeplessness, headaches and sometimes sexual problems. These side effects generally improve with time. If your side effects are particularly troublesome, let your doctor know.



You can read more about antidepressants on Depression Alliance's website at [whatyoushouldknow.depression-alliance.co.uk](http://whatyoushouldknow.depression-alliance.co.uk) and the Royal College of Psychiatrists' website at [rpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfoforall/problems/depression/antidepressants.aspx](http://rpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfoforall/problems/depression/antidepressants.aspx)

### **St John's wort**

St John's wort is a herbal treatment. Some research has shown that it may help people with mild or moderate depression.

It is generally not recommended for people with cancer or other long-term physical health problems. This is partly because it can react with other medicines, including cancer treatments, making them less effective.

If you are thinking of taking St John's wort, it is important to speak to your doctor first.

## Suicidal feelings

If your quality of life has been affected by your cancer or its treatment, you may be feeling extremely depressed or hopeless. Some people may feel that life is not worth living and may think about killing themselves. It is common for people who are very depressed to feel they are a burden to others and that their family would be better off without them.

Often people who feel this way believe that no one will be able to help them. This is not true. It is very important to talk to your doctor so they can arrange specialist help for you.

If you have any of the following symptoms, you need to seek help:

- Suicidal thoughts or plans.
- Hearing voices (hallucinations).
- Thoughts about self-harm.

In some situations, your doctor may suggest you spend a few days in hospital, where specially trained staff can support you and help you feel better as quickly as possible. In some areas, specialist psychiatric support teams can visit you at home.

Samaritans has a 24-hour confidential helpline that provides support to anyone in emotional crisis. The phone number is **08457 90 90 90**. See page 86 for full contact details.



# PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF YOUR EMOTIONS

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**The stress of cancer and its treatment can affect your emotions in many ways. Our feelings can affect our energy levels, sexual desire, ability to sleep or appetite. How long these effects last will vary from person to person.**

### **Fatigue (extreme tiredness)**

Fatigue is an overwhelming feeling of tiredness or exhaustion. It is very common in people who are anxious or depressed. But it is also a very common side effect of many cancer treatments. This can make it difficult to know what is causing your fatigue, and it is often a bit of both. If you think your tiredness is due to anxiety or depression, some of the self-help ideas listed on pages 60–69 may help.



**If your fatigue is due to your cancer or its treatment, you may find our booklet *Coping with fatigue* helpful.**

## Loss of appetite

Anxiety or depression can cause you to lose your appetite. In turn, this may make you lose weight.

Some people just don't feel hungry, or they feel full soon after starting a meal. Others find that food makes them feel sick, or they notice a change in the taste of some foods.

If your loss of appetite is due to anxiety or depression, some of the ideas on pages 40–42 may help.

We have a series of booklets about diet and cancer. These give helpful advice on:

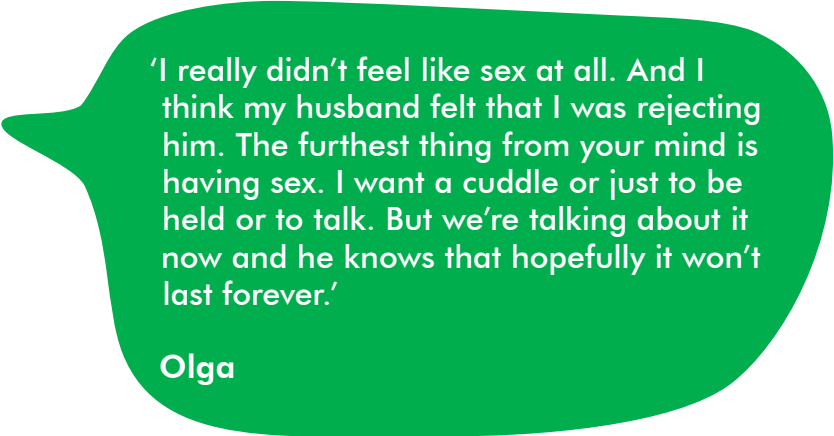
- following a healthy diet
- how to cope with eating problems caused by cancer or its treatment
- how to boost your energy and protein intake when your appetite is poor.



## Loss of interest in sex

You may notice that your interest in sex decreases when you are anxious. You may also lose interest in sex if you're depressed. People are often reluctant to talk about this very intimate area of their lives, but if you have a partner, it can help to talk to them about how you feel. It may help you both feel more secure if you explain that your lack of interest doesn't mean a lack of affection.

You may need to focus more on sensuality than sexuality at this time. Using touch can be an important way of telling someone how you feel. It can help you communicate emotions that are not easily expressed in words.



'I really didn't feel like sex at all. And I think my husband felt that I was rejecting him. The furthest thing from your mind is having sex. I want a cuddle or just to be held or to talk. But we're talking about it now and he knows that hopefully it won't last forever.'

**Olga**

Whether you're in a relationship or not, cancer and its treatments can affect your sexual identity. Treatments such as surgery or chemotherapy may lead to physical changes that affect your body image (see page 30). Other aspects of treatment may leave you feeling unattractive or uninterested in sex.

These are very natural and understandable feelings. If you have trouble coping, you may find it helpful to discuss your feelings with a trained counsellor. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the charity Relate provides relationship counselling and offers support by phone and online. In Scotland, you can contact Relationships Scotland. See page 85 for contact details for these organisations.

If you feel comfortable, you can also discuss problems with your GP, cancer specialist or clinical nurse specialist. Or if you would prefer to speak to someone over the phone, you may want to call our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**.



You may find our booklets *Sexuality and cancer – information for men* or *Sexuality and cancer – information for women* helpful in coping with the effects of cancer and its treatment.

## Pain

Anxiety and depression can change how you feel and react to pain. This means that pain can be harder to bear.

Dealing with your emotions or treating the depression can help reduce your pain, as well as improve your mood. Your doctor or nurse can help you manage both physical and emotional pain.



If your pain is due to your cancer or its treatment, our booklet *Controlling cancer pain* may be helpful.

## Sleep problems

Many people have trouble sleeping at some point in their life. If you have cancer, you may find it difficult to sleep because of general anxiety, worry about treatment or fears about the future. Some of the following suggestions may help you sleep better. These are examples and other things may work for you.

- Have a regular routine at bedtime and get up and go to bed at the same time each day.
- If you can, avoid sleeping during the day.
- Doing gentle exercise before you go to bed may help you sleep.
- Avoid caffeinated tea, coffee or cocoa for a few hours before you go to bed. Try a warm, milky, decaffeinated drink instead.
- Have a warm bath using a relaxing bath soak or a few drops of lavender oil. You could also sprinkle a couple of drops of lavender oil on your pillow.
- If you can't sleep or if you wake up early, don't try so hard to sleep. Instead, try to relax and rest your body.
- If you find yourself lying awake and feeling anxious, it may help to go to another room for a while and do something else. You could read a book or listen to music or the radio.
- Keep your bedroom as a relaxing environment and your bed as a place to sleep. It's fine to spend some time reading before you fall asleep, but avoid watching TV or using a laptop in the bedroom.

- Switch off bright screens such as TVs, smart phones or computers one hour before going to bed.
- Make sure your bed is comfortable and cool.
- If it's very noisy, try using ear plugs.
- If streetlights or early morning sunlight affect your sleep, make sure you have thick curtains or blinds, or use an eye mask.

Relaxation CDs, tapes or podcasts can also be very useful for helping you get to sleep. You can also access meditation and relaxation audio files and videos on our Learn Zone website – visit [learnzone.org.uk/courses/course.php?id=55](https://learnzone.org.uk/courses/course.php?id=55)



We have more information about difficulty sleeping (insomnia).



# COPING WITH FAMILY LIFE AND WORK

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**Working or looking after a family can be hard work, even when you're well. It may seem impossible to try to juggle work life and/or family life at the same time as coping with cancer and all the emotions it can cause. It can also feel difficult to support other people when you feel in need of support yourself.**

It is important to be realistic about what you can manage.

Try to get help from a partner, your family or your friends before things become too much for you to cope with. You may need to give up some or all of your responsibilities for a short time. This may help you concentrate on coping with the cancer and its effects.

If you're a parent, you may not be able to do all the things you usually do for your children. This doesn't mean you have failed in any way. It just means you need to plan your time and save your energy for the most important tasks.

Your family members may also be finding it difficult to cope with changes to family life. They also will have fears about the future. Try to talk openly about concerns and how you can help support each other.

Work is an important part of life for some people. It can help to have a discussion with your employer about the best way to manage your work. If you're finding things very difficult to cope with, you may need to take time off until you feel better. It can feel very different going back to work. Your priorities can change, and you may want to consider working part-time or returning to work gradually.



You may find it helpful to read our booklet *Work and cancer*. If you're self-employed, you may also like to read our booklet *Self-employment and cancer*. We also have a booklet for carers called *Working while caring for someone with cancer*.

You may try to hide what you really feel so that you don't upset other people. But it can be reassuring to get your concerns out in the open and find that others feel the same. Talking about your worries may be all you need to do to help you manage your family and work life. See pages 14–21 for information on talking to family and friends about your cancer.

It may also be helpful to talk to someone outside the family, such as a good friend or trained counsellor. For more information about getting professional help, see pages 72–75.

## If you have a partner

Being diagnosed with a serious illness can be difficult for you as an individual, but if you have a partner, it can also affect them. Coping with cancer can put a strain on relationships. But some couples come to a new understanding and love for each other as a result of overcoming a shared challenge like cancer.

Communication plays a big part in any relationship. Talking about the illness and the impact it's having can be an important way of helping you both cope with it. You and your partner may have different feelings, and you may feel different things at different times.



You or your partner may not always want, or feel able, to talk. In these situations, you or your partner can get emotional support from your nurse specialist, other members of the hospital team or any of the organisations listed on pages 83–88.

If you have become less interested in sex as a result of cancer or its treatment, see pages 48–49 for information about the help available.



Our leaflet *Cancer, you and your partner* has more information about the impact cancer can have on relationships, and what may help.

## Hospices

Hospices can help anyone with cancer and other chronic illnesses, not just people who are seriously ill.

They can offer symptom control, physiotherapy, psychological support and a range of complementary therapies, such as massage and reflexology. The care is free and it may help you relax and reduce stress.

Visiting a hospice for day therapy can also give you the chance to meet people going through similar things to you. It can also give your family or carers some time for themselves.

Your GP or hospital doctor can organise a referral for hospice support.

## Talking to children about cancer


It is not always easy to talk to children about cancer or your emotions. However, it's often best to be as open with them as you can and give them information that's appropriate to their age.

If you're a parent with young children and you're very tired, worried or upset, it may help for someone else to look after the children for a while to give you a break. This can be upsetting for all of you. But don't feel that this is a failure on your part. Giving yourself some time now will help later. At other times, you may feel that having your children around helps you feel better.

Children can be very loving and affectionate, and this can be very helpful. Hugs, kisses and knowing your children love you can help you feel more positive. Simply making an effort to smile and talk to them may help you feel better. Doing things with your children can also help improve your mood, for example playing with them or taking them for a walk, bike ride or swim.



You may find our booklet *Talking to children and teenagers when an adult has cancer* helpful. We also have a video on our website about talking to children – visit [macmillan.org.uk/talkingtochildren](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/talkingtochildren)



**'Life is like a game of cards.  
Sometimes you get a good  
hand, sometimes a bad one.  
But whatever the hand, good or  
bad, you have to play it to have  
any chance of winning.'**

# HOW YOU CAN HELP YOURSELF

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## **There are many sources of support that can help you. But there are also things you can do yourself to feel better.**

It's important to look after yourself. If you're finding it difficult to manage your feelings, it can help to take things one day at a time and not look too far ahead. You may find that life gets easier to cope with as time passes.

Doing even the smallest tasks may help you feel better:

- Try to eat well every day. (If you have eating problems or a poor appetite, talk to your doctor or nurse.)
- If you can, get up and dressed every day.
- If you feel unwell, get some extra rest and don't delay seeing your doctor.
- Accept offers of help, or turn to other people for help.
- Keep to a regular sleeping pattern if you can.
- Try to exercise regularly – it can help you relax, boost your energy and help you sleep (see pages 63–64).
- Try to share your feelings.
- Try to keep your social life active by staying in contact with your family and friends.
- Recognise when you're feeling run down and stressed. For example, you may have headaches, trouble sleeping, tummy problems, or colds that don't go away. If you feel like this, see your doctor for advice.

- Try to find some time just for yourself every day when you can fully relax. But try not to sit still in one place for long periods of time. It can help to make your environment as comfortable as possible, perhaps with a comfy chair and plenty of light and fresh air. Listening to music or radio programmes may also help.
- If you can, try to make plans to do things you enjoy. You could book things a few weeks ahead, as this will give you something to look forward to.
- Some people find they lose motivation and begin to limit the amount of things they do. This can add to the feeling of being alone, so try to give yourself goals to achieve.

## Taking control of your situation

Learning about the cancer and its treatment can give you back some feeling of control. This can help you feel more confident about the future. But it's up to you to decide how much information you would like at any time.

The information can help you during talks with your doctor, your family and your friends. It will also help you feel more involved in your care, and more in control generally.

It will also help if you tell people what you really think and feel. This will help them understand the issues that are important to you. You may like to use the table on 35 to write down your hopes and fears.



The book *The cancer journey: positive steps to heal yourself* (2011) offers support and advice to help you deal with your cancer diagnosis. It is written by P Evans, P Noble and N Hull-Malham, published by Noble, and is available for £11.99.

## Reliable sources of information

Your doctors and nurses are in the best position to help you and answer your questions, because they know about your situation. They may not always have the information you're looking for though, and when they don't, there are lots of other reliable sources you can use.

A lot of misleading information is available, and many people still believe myths about cancer. It is important to get information that's up to date and comes from a reliable source.

You can get information from Macmillan. We have information in a range of formats about cancer, cancer treatments and all aspects of living with cancer (see page 78). You can order any of our information by visiting [be.macmillan.org.uk](https://be.macmillan.org.uk) or by calling our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**. You can also view this information online at [macmillan.org.uk](https://macmillan.org.uk)

Reliable information is also available from the organisations listed on pages 86–87.

'It's all rather confusing for us patients, but my philosophy is to be pragmatic and proactive in getting as much information as possible.'

Iain

## Releasing tension

Tension can often be released by talking to other people. As well as talking to family or friends, you can call our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**, or speak to your hospital staff or GP.

Some people find it helps to write down how they feel. Keeping a diary or journal may be a way of expressing your fears and worries, without having to talk them through with other people. You could use the table on page 35 to write down your hopes and fears.

You could also express yourself through drawing, painting, playing music or another creative hobby.

Sometimes you may feel like it's all getting too much for you. If you feel this way, try thumping a cushion or pillow, turning the radio or CD player up very loud, or screaming. Having a good cry can also help release emotions. These things won't do anyone any harm and they may leave you feeling much better.

## Physical activity

Doing physical activity can help us manage stress, anxiety and depression. It helps our bodies release chemicals (endorphins) that lift our mood and lower stress hormones. It can help with some side effects of treatment, such as tiredness, and also help you sleep better. It can give you more energy, which can help you feel more able to deal with problems.

It can really help to be active with other people, for example by joining an exercise group or going with family or friends. It can also be helpful to be active outdoors in a green environment, like a park. You could try gardening or joining a walking group. There are free, guided health walks across the UK.



Macmillan has teamed up with the Ramblers to offer Walking for Health – a network of organised walks across England. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/walkingforhealth](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/walkingforhealth) to search for a walk near you.

See page 88 for walking organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



You may like to read our booklet *Physical activity and cancer*.



## Complementary therapies

There are many types of complementary therapy that may help you feel better, including acupuncture, aromatherapy, meditation, visualisation, homeopathy, art therapy and reflexology.

Complementary therapists usually work with the person as a whole. This is called a **holistic approach**. A complementary therapist who listens and cares may help you cope with some of your difficult feelings, which can help you get back some control.

Some hospitals and hospices provide complementary therapies alongside conventional cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy. See page 56 for more information on hospices. Some support groups also offer complementary therapies.

'The hospice was lovely. They have got various therapies that they offer you. I had reflexology, which was foot massage, which I loved. That was wonderful. It made me feel so relaxed.'

**Donna**

Complementary therapies may help you:

- feel better and improve your quality of life
- feel less stressed, tense and anxious
- sleep better
- feel more in control
- with some of your cancer symptoms
- with some of the side effects of your cancer treatment.

You might be advised not to have complementary therapies. This is because it is not safe to have them if you have certain types of cancer or if you are having certain treatments. Your doctor will be able to give you more information about this. It is very important to tell your cancer doctor if you are thinking about having any complementary or alternative therapy.

If you have a complementary therapy, you should always use a registered therapist. And always let your complementary therapist know you have cancer. The British Complementary Medicine Association (see page 84) can give you the names of registered therapists and advice on what to look for. Remember to check the cost of treatment beforehand to make sure you're fairly charged.



You may like to read our booklet *Cancer and complementary therapies*.

## Self-help and support groups

Joining a self-help or support group can have many benefits. These groups offer a chance to talk to other people who may be in a similar situation to you, and who may be facing the same challenges. Not everyone finds talking in a group easy. It may help to go along to see what the group is like and then make a decision.

You can search for groups in your area online by visiting [macmillan.org.uk/in-your-area](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/in-your-area) Alternatively, you can call our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00** and they can help you find local groups.

## Changing priorities

Cancer often causes people to think about their lives and their priorities. Some people make significant changes to their lives, such as changing their job. Or it may be a good time to think about joining a local hobby group so you can meet people. Doing something new may also help you feel better.

## Alcohol and recreational drugs

It may feel good at first to have a few drinks or take recreational drugs to help you forget how you're feeling. However, this is only a short-term solution. Alcohol and drugs can cause problems and damage relationships with family and friends. In the long-term, alcohol and recreational drugs may seriously damage your health.

Taking recreational drugs can also change the effect of some painkillers, so your doctor or nurse may ask you about this. It is important to be open with them about using these drugs.

## Do feelings affect the cancer?

Your feelings and attitudes can affect the way you cope with cancer and its treatment, but there is no evidence that your thoughts, feelings or attitudes can influence the cancer itself. There is also no evidence that feeling negative or sad can delay your recovery from cancer or its treatment.

It is important to remember that cancer is influenced by many things, including our environment, our diet, and our genetic and physical make-up.

Whatever you're feeling is okay. It's important that you're able to talk honestly, and cry if you need to. This can help release tension and stress. It can even bring you closer to the person you're talking to. It's important to remember that all feelings and thoughts pass, and that you'll feel better at some point in the future.

### Recording feelings

You may like to use the table on the next page to write about your good and bad days. This may help you decide on steps you can take to have more good days.

The table is a person-centred thinking tool, taken from **thinkaboutyourlife.org**, which was developed by cancer survivors. The website has examples, stories and support to help you use the tool.



**Good days**



**Bad days**

**Next steps**



# GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP

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Help from your healthcare team 72



**If you find your feelings and emotions are overwhelming, or if you are becoming depressed (see pages 38–43), then it may be time to get professional help.**

## **Help from your GP**

GP appointments are usually short, so try to plan what you want to say before you see the doctor. It can help to write things down before the appointment. When you are with your GP, try to tell them how you really feel. Focus on what concerns you most. This will help them give you the most helpful advice or treatment.

Consider taking a relative or friend along to help remind you of everything you want to discuss. They can also remind you of anything the doctor says later on. Some GPs are happy for you to record the discussion if you would like to listen to it later. Remember to check this is okay with your GP before the discussion starts.

## **Help from your healthcare team**

Many people find they get a lot of support from the hospital staff looking after them during their treatment.

If you're having cancer treatment, you may be assigned a **clinical nurse specialist** or **key worker**. These specialist nurses are often the point of contact at the hospital. They can give information and support to you and your family.

They will often help with concerns you may feel you can't talk to your consultant about, like worries about travelling, finances or work. They're also likely to have details of local support groups and other organisations that may be able to help.

There are many other members of the wider healthcare team who may be able to help you cope with your feelings and emotions. Each one has a different role, but usually you'll only need the help of one or two of them.

- **Counsellors** are trained to listen and help people talk through their problems. They will not give advice or provide answers, but they will help you find your own solutions. This can be very helpful, particularly if you don't feel able to discuss your feelings and emotions with people close to you.
- **Clinical psychologists** are trained to understand what people think and feel, and how they behave – particularly in stressful situations such as coping with cancer. They can also help people with their relationships. If you're depressed or anxious, a clinical psychologist can help you manage your thoughts and change the way you think. Or they can help you change your behaviour, to help you feel better.
- **Psychiatrists** are doctors who specialise in diagnosing and treating mental health problems, including depression and anxiety. Some psychiatrists are specially trained in looking after the mental health of people with physical illness (**liaison psychiatrists**) and some specialise in the mental health of people with cancer (**psycho-oncologists**).
- **Community psychiatric nurses** specialise in helping people live with all types of mental health problem.

If your doctor suggests referring you to a psychiatrist, this does not necessarily mean there is anything seriously wrong with you. It also does not mean you will have to go into hospital.

Seeing a psychiatrist can be helpful if:

- there are problems with your antidepressant or anti-anxiety medicines
- you have severe anxiety or depression
- you have problems with thoughts, concentration or memory
- you have thoughts about harming yourself or ending your life (see page 43).

## Talking therapies

Talking therapies can help people who have anxiety or depression. There are many different types available, including psychological therapy and counselling. Although we've listed a few specific types of talking therapy here, there are others to choose from.

## Counselling

Many people get support by talking to close family members or friends. However, your feelings may be quite confused and you might find them difficult to talk about with people close to you. It can help to talk to someone outside your family and circle of friends, who has been trained to listen and can help you explore your feelings. Having the time to talk things through often helps you see a way forward.

Talking one-to-one with a trained counsellor can help you sort out your feelings and find ways of coping with them. Some GPs have counsellors in their practice, or they can refer you to one. You may need to pay for counselling, particularly if you would like to see a counsellor long-term.



Visit [macmillan.org.uk/counselling](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/counselling) to watch a video on our website about how counselling can help.

## Group therapy

In group therapy, a trained therapist (counsellor or other professional) encourages a group of individuals to share their feelings and experiences with each other.

## Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

The way we think can have a powerful effect on how we feel. This includes the way we think about ourselves, our world or the future. People who are anxious or depressed often have negative patterns of thinking and behaviour, which keep them feeling low. CBT is designed to break this cycle.

When people are depressed, they often stop doing the things they used to enjoy. This loss of pleasurable activities then adds to the depression. Part of CBT is designed to help you find out which things give you a sense of satisfaction and pleasure.

Even when nothing else changes, the way you think about things can affect how you feel. The therapist will help you recognise the negative thoughts that are making you feel low. This will help you find effective ways to challenge them.



You can ask your doctor or nurse to tell you about any local counselling and support services that are available to you. You can search for counsellors on the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy's website – visit [itsgoodtotalk.org.uk](http://itsgoodtotalk.org.uk) Organisations that provide counselling and emotional support are also listed on pages 83–86.

UNDERSTANDING  
**PRIMARY  
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**COPING** WITH  
**SHORTNESS**  
OF BREATH

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UNDERSTANDING  
**BRAIN  
TUMORS**

UNDERSTANDING  
**INVASIVE AND  
ADVANCED  
BLADDER** CANCER

CONTROLLING  
**SYMPTOMS**  
OF CANCER

CONTROLLING THE  
**SYMPTOMS**  
OF CANCER

**BREAST**  
RADIATION  
THERAPY

**MEN**  
AND  
WOMEN

**RUNNING**

UNDERSTANDING  
**BREAST  
CANCER**

UNDERSTANDING  
**COLON  
CANCER**

UNDERSTANDING  
**RECTAL  
CANCER**

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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 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.

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

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
- 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](mailto: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. No one should face cancer alone.**

## 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 Monday–Friday, 9am–8pm. Our cancer support specialists can:

- help with any medical questions you have about your cancer or treatment
- help you access benefits and give you financial advice
- 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 advice

Our financial guidance team can give you advice 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](https://www.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](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/work)

# Other useful organisations

There are lots of other organisations that can give you information or support.

## Counselling and emotional support

### Action on Depression

Thorn House, 5 Rose Street,  
Edinburgh EH2 2PR

**Helpline** 0808 802 2020

(Wed, 2–4pm)

**Tel** 0131 243 2786

**Email** [admin@actionondepression.org](mailto:admin@actionondepression.org)

**www.actionondepression.org**

Supports people with depression in Scotland.

Provides information, support and understanding. Offers a network of self-help groups where people with depression can share their experiences and coping strategies with others, as well as an information service by phone, post and email.

## Anxiety UK

Zion Community  
Resource Centre,  
339 Stretford Road,  
Manchester M15 4ZY

**Helpline** 08444 775 774  
(Mon–Fri, 9.30am–5.30pm)

**Email**

[support@anxietyuk.org.uk](mailto:support@anxietyuk.org.uk)

**www.anxietyuk.org.uk**

Supports people living with anxiety, through information, support and other services.

## Aware Defeat Depression

56 Strand Road,  
Derry BT48 7AJ

**Helpline** 08451 20 29 61

**Email** [help@aware-ni.org](mailto:help@aware-ni.org)

**www.aware-ni.org**

Supports people with depression in Northern Ireland. Has a helpline and a network of support groups where group members can share information, discuss options and support each other. Also welcomes and supports carers.

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

BACP House,  
15 St John's Business Park,  
Lutterworth LE17 4HB  
**Tel** 01455 883 300  
**Textphone** 01455 560 606  
**Email** bacp@bacp.co.uk  
**www.bacp.co.uk** and  
**www.itsgoodtotalk.org.uk**

Aims to promote awareness of counselling and increase availability throughout the UK. Can refer people to a local counsellor, and there is a searchable list on its website. Can also provide an information sheet for people seeking help.

### **British Complementary Medicine Association**

PO Box 5122,  
Bournemouth BH8 0WG  
**Tel** 0845 345 5977 (Mon–Tue  
and Thu–Fri, 10am–5pm)  
**Email** office@bcma.co.uk  
**www.bcma.co.uk**

Has a code of conduct, and a list of registered practitioners who belong to member organisations. Can provide practitioners' telephone numbers.

### **Depression Alliance**

20 Great Dover Street,  
London SE1 4LX

**Tel** 0845 123 2320

#### **Email**

info@depressionalliance.org  
**www.depressionalliance.org**  
and **www.whatyoushould  
know.depression-alliance.  
co.uk**

Supports people with depression in the UK. Has a network of self-help groups in England and a variety of free publications that offer advice and information on depression and related topics.

### **Journeys (formerly the Depression Alliance Cymru)**

38 Albany Road,  
Cardiff CF24 3RQ

**Tel** 029 2069 2891

#### **Email**

info@journeysonline.org.uk  
**www.journeysonline.org.uk**

Supports people with depression in Wales, and their family and friends. Provides information, practical resources, services and training that promote the development of skills and strategies to help people find their own route to recovery. Coordinates a network of self-help groups.

**MIND**

15–19 Broadway,  
London E15 4BQ

**Infoline** 0300 123 3393

**Email** [contact@mind.org.uk](mailto:contact@mind.org.uk)

**www.mind.org.uk**

Works for a better life for everyone with experience of mental distress. Provides information on all aspects of mental health, including legal matters. Campaigns for better understanding and offers mental health services through a network of local MIND associations in England and Wales.

**MIND Cymru**

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Quebec House,  
5–19 Cowbridge Road East,  
Cardiff CF11 9AB

**Tel** 029 2039 5123

**Email**

[contactwales@mind.org.uk](mailto:contactwales@mind.org.uk)

**Relate**

Premier House, Carolina Court,  
Lakeside, Doncaster DN4 5RA

**Tel** 0300 100 1234

**www.relate.org.uk**

Offers advice, relationship counselling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and support in England and Wales.

**Relate Northern Ireland**

3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Floor,  
3 Glengall Street,  
Belfast BT12 5AB

**Tel** 028 9032 3454

**Email** [office@relateni.org](mailto:office@relateni.org)

**www.relateni.org**

Provides relationship and family counselling across Northern Ireland.

**Relationships Scotland**

18 York Place,  
Edinburgh EH1 3EP

**Tel** 0845 119 2020

**Email** [enquiries@relationships-scotland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@relationships-scotland.org.uk)

**www.relationships-scotland.org.uk**

Provides relationship counselling, mediation and family support across Scotland.

**Royal College of Psychiatrists**

21 Prescott Street,  
London E1 8BB

**Tel** 020 7235 2351

**Email** [reception@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:reception@rcpsych.ac.uk)

**www.rcpsych.ac.uk**

The professional body for psychiatrists in the UK and Ireland. Produces information leaflets for the public that you can download from the website.

### **Samaritans**

Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK,  
Chris, PO Box 90 90,  
Stirling FK8 2SA

**Tel** 08457 90 90 90

**Email** [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**www.samaritans.org**

Confidential emotional support from trained volunteers for people in emotional crisis, not only those who are suicidal. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### **Sane**

1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Cityside House,  
40 Adler Street,  
London E1 1EE

**Tel** 0845 767 8000

(Mon–Sun, 6–11pm)

**Email** [sanemail@sane.org.uk](mailto:sanemail@sane.org.uk)

**www.sane.org.uk**

Offers information and advice on all aspects of mental health for people with mental illness, or their families or friends.

### **Scottish Association for Mental Health**

Cumrae House,  
15 Carlton Court,  
Glasgow G5 9JP

**Tel** 0141 530 1000

**Email** [enquire@samh.org.uk](mailto:enquire@samh.org.uk)

**www.samh.org.uk**

Offers support, information and advice on various aspects of mental health.

### **General cancer organisations**

#### **Cancer Black Care**

79 Acton Lane,  
London NW10 8UT

**Tel** 020 8961 4151

(Mon–Fri, 9.30am–4.30pm)

**Email**

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

**www.cancerblackcare.org.uk**

Offers a variety of information and support for people with cancer from ethnic communities, their families, carers and friends. Welcomes people from different ethnic groups including African, Asian, Turkish and African-Caribbean communities.

## **Cancer Focus Northern Ireland**

40–44 Eglantine Avenue,  
Belfast BT9 6DX

**Tel** 0800 783 3339

**Email** [hello@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:hello@cancerfocusni.org)  
**www.cancerfocusni.org**

Provides a variety of services for people with cancer and their families, including a free telephone helpline, which is staffed by specially trained nurses with experience in cancer care.

## **Cancer Support Scotland**

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

**Tel** 0800 652 4531

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

**www.cancersupport  
scotland.org**

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

## **Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres**

1<sup>st</sup> Floor, One Waterloo Street,  
Glasgow G2 6AY

**Tel** 0300 123 1801

**Email** [enquiries@maggiescentres.org](mailto:enquiries@maggiescentres.org)  
**www.maggiescentres.org**

Located throughout the country, Maggie's Centres offer free, comprehensive support for anyone affected by cancer. You can access information, benefits advice, and emotional or psychological support.

## **Tenovus**

Gleider House, Ty Glas Road,  
Llanishen, Cardiff CF14 5BD

**Tel** 0808 808 1010

**Email** [post@tenovus.com](mailto:post@tenovus.com)  
**www.tenovus.org.uk**

Provides a variety of services to people with cancer and their families, including counselling and a freephone cancer helpline.



## Organisations that can help with physical activity

### Paths for All

Office 8, Forrester Lodge,  
Inglewood House, Tullibody  
Road, Alloa FK10 2HU

**Tel** 01259 218888

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

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

A partnership of more than 20 national organisations promoting walking for health in communities and work-places throughout Scotland. Free group walks are organised every week.

### Ramblers Cymru

3 Coopers Yard,  
Curran Road,  
Cardiff CF10 5NB

**Tel** 029 2064 4308

**Email**

[cerddwyr@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:cerddwyr@ramblers.org.uk)

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

Works to promote walking for pleasure, health, leisure and transport to everyone in Wales. Organises guided walks throughout the year.

### Walk NI

The Stableyard,  
Barnett Demesne,  
Malone Road,  
Belfast BT9 5PB

**Tel** 028 9030 3930

**Email** [info@walkni.com](mailto:info@walkni.com)

**[www.walkni.com](http://www.walkni.com)**

Has details of walking trails throughout Northern Ireland and links to walking groups in your local area.

### Walking for Health

The Ramblers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor,  
89 Albert Embankment,  
London SE1 7TW

**Tel** 020 7339 8541

**Email** [walkingforhealth@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:walkingforhealth@ramblers.org.uk)

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

England's largest network of health walks schemes run by Macmillan and the Ramblers. Organises free, guided health walks across England.



You can search for more organisations on our website at [macmillan.org.uk/organisations](http://macmillan.org.uk/organisations), or call us on 0808 808 00 00.

## 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

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# Can you do something to help?

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

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



## **Share your cancer experience**

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

## **Campaign for change**

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

## **Help someone in your community**

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

## **Raise money**

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

## **Give money**

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

**Call us to find out more**

**0300 1000 200**

**[macmillan.org.uk/getinvolved](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

Card number

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Security number

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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 taxpayer and I would like Macmillan Cancer Support to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make in the future, as Gift Aid donations, until I notify you otherwise.

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in each tax year, that is at least equal to the tax that Charities & CASCs I donate to will reclaim on my gifts. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify and that 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

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

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

Together, we are all Macmillan Cancer Support.

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

Hard of hearing? Use textphone 0808 808 0121, or Text Relay.  
Non-English speaker? Interpreters available.  
Braille and large print versions on request.

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