

MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT

CANCER AND RELATIONSHIPS

Support for partners, families and friends



Knowing about things and feeling in control puts my mind at ease and helps me cope.

Tarsim, whose son Amrik was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma



About this booklet

This booklet is about coping with your feelings when someone close to you has cancer. It is for anyone who is close to someone with cancer, including partners, family members and friends.

We hope it helps you deal with some of the questions or feelings you may have. It also gives suggestions for coping and getting the support you need.

How to use this booklet

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

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

On pages 93 to 99, there are some useful addresses and websites. There is also space to write down questions and notes.

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

Quotes

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

For more information

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


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

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

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

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'We tried to be strong, to show him that we were going to deal with it and get him well. But when it's your own child it's extremely hard.'

Tarsim

YOUR FEELINGS

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How you might feel

Going through cancer can be very emotional, with many ups and downs. This is often true for the person who has cancer and the people close to them.

When someone close to you has cancer, you may have many different feelings. These feelings may come and go. You may each have good days when you feel positive, and bad days when your fears and worries are worse.

You may think you should ignore your own feelings and focus on looking after the person with cancer. But it is not good for you to ignore your feelings for a long time. You should try to take care of yourself during this stressful time. Paying attention to your feelings is an important part of this. It can help you support the person with cancer.

'When mum was diagnosed, she wanted me with her. It was a very hard moment. I wanted to run away, but knew I needed to be strong, and help as much as I could.'

Melvin

Here are some common feelings people have when someone they care about has cancer. We have tips for what can help you cope with these feelings on pages 15 to 19.

Shock

To begin with, you may find the news difficult to take in. You might think it cannot be true. You may feel numb and find it difficult to show how you feel. This is natural. It can take time to understand the news and get over the shock.

Fear

You may feel scared and anxious about what is happening. You may also worry about the future. Different things can make you scared or worried. These can include:

- diagnosis
- treatment
- test results
- making decisions.

Anxiety and uncertainty

You will probably feel anxious about what is happening and unsure about how you are going to cope. Cancer can take away your feelings of control. Feeling uncertain about the future can be one of the most difficult things to deal with.

It can help to recognise when you feel like this. Try to focus on the things you can change or control. For example, it may help to follow a routine. Or you might make positive lifestyle changes that can make you feel better, such as eating a healthy diet.



'I think the hardest feeling is the instability – the fact that everything that's mapped out for you in your life has just been taken out from underneath you.'

Lara (right), whose husband Ashley (left) was diagnosed with head and neck cancer

Denial

You might try to deny what is happening because you just want to continue as normal. You might find it hard to accept that someone close to you has cancer. This is a normal reaction. Denial is a way of coping and may give you some time to adjust. But if it lasts for weeks or months, it can become a problem. Your partner, family members or friends may try to talk to you about this if they are worried about you. Denial can stop you from getting the help you need.

If you are struggling, take some time to think about your needs. Then think about what support you would like from other people.

If the person close to you is diagnosed with advanced cancer, you may both find it hard to accept. By dealing with this, you may be able to support each other.

Grief and loss

You may feel grief and loss for the life you both had before cancer. You may also grieve because you have lost a sense of certainty about the future. It is important to allow yourself to grieve for these losses. It can take time to come to terms with them.

Sadness

Sadness is a natural feeling when someone close to you has cancer. You will probably feel sad for the person who is ill, and wish it was not happening.

'When we got home, Amrik sat down at the table and that's the only time I ever saw him cry. He said, 'Mum, I'm 18, why me?' I get upset now even though it's nearly four years ago. We both cried actually.'

Tarsim

Everyone has good and bad days. Do not expect to feel positive or happy all the time. Sadness can come and go. You may feel sad even at times when you would usually enjoy yourself.

But if you feel sad for a few weeks or more, you may be depressed. Symptoms of depression can include:

- feeling sad or numb for a few weeks or more
- struggling to enjoy things that you usually would
- sleeping problems
- difficulty concentrating or making decisions.

If you think you or the person with cancer may be depressed, talk to your GP. There are treatments that can help. You can also contact a support organisation (see pages 93 to 99).

Anger

Many people feel angry. This is a normal reaction. You may be angry at people you are close to. There are different reasons for being angry.

It may be because:

- this has happened to a person you care about, and to you
- the cancer has changed your lives
- you are trying to cope with too much
- it is covering other feelings, such as sadness, fear or anxiety.

Talking to someone about how you feel can stop anger building up. If you find it difficult to control your anger, look out for signs that you are getting angry. When you feel you are getting angry, try counting to 10, breathing deeply or walking away from the situation.

Resentment

If someone close to you is unwell, you may feel resentful at times. It is natural to feel like this. You may not have much time to do the things you enjoy, or to see your friends. The person with cancer may be moody or withdrawn at times. They may not notice the things you are doing for them. Or they may be irritable, especially if they are in pain.

Many people take out their fear or anxiety on the person closest to them, which can be difficult to deal with. If this happens to you, you may feel unwanted and resentful.

Try to talk to them and explain how you feel. You could choose a time when you are both having a good day. Or you may find it easier to talk about your feelings with someone else.

Try not to let any feelings of anger and resentment build up. Try to understand how the other person feels. This may stop your anger and irritation developing into an argument.

Guilt

Feeling guilty is common. You may feel guilty about:

- being well when the person you care about has cancer
- finding it hard to cope
- whether you are doing enough to help
- not having a good relationship with the person in the past
- feeling resentful if your own needs are not being met
- not being able to give as much time to other roles, such as being a parent, partner or employee.

'One feeling that came up a lot was guilt. I would feel guilty when I was at work because I wasn't at home. I would feel guilty when I was at my home and not theirs.'

Claire

When you feel guilty, it is normal to hide your feelings. This can make it difficult for people to understand what you are going through. If you feel guilty, talk about it with someone you trust. They may help you see things differently.



'My biggest feeling was guilt. Because you're expected to look after your children, that's what your role as a mother is. But this was something I felt powerless to do anything about.'

Tarsim

Loneliness

When someone close to you has cancer, you may feel like you are on your own. You may feel that other people do not understand what you are going through. People may not know about all the things you have to do. It may help to explain this to them.

If you are looking after the person with cancer, you could ask someone else to spend time with them to give you a break. You can also speak to your GP or social worker, or the cancer team at the hospital. They can help you get an assessment of your needs, which could lead to you getting support. We have more information for carers on pages 75 to 85 and in our booklet **Looking after someone with cancer** (see page 88).

There are two people dealing with everything. He's got the cancer and I have to cope with everything else.'

Amanda

Tiredness and exhaustion

You will probably feel tired or even exhausted at times. Looking after someone can be physically and emotionally tiring. It is important to take care of yourself.

Coping with your feelings

There are different things that you can do to help you cope with any difficult feelings you have.

Showing your feelings

People often have different ways of showing their feelings. Sometimes this may lead to confusion.

It helps to remember that everyone reacts differently. Some people find it easy to talk about their feelings. But not everyone is comfortable with this and may show their feelings in other ways. They may show they care by:

- hugs, touch and cuddles
- doing helpful things like cooking a meal or looking after the house
- bringing you gifts
- sitting quietly with you if you need it.

Sharing your feelings

Whatever you are feeling, it can help to talk about it with someone you trust. Sharing your feelings can help you accept the situation and remember what is important to you.

You may want to talk to someone you know well, or you may prefer to talk to someone outside of your situation.

Sometimes people do not want to talk about their feelings in case it upsets others. But it is okay to be sad or upset. This is a natural reaction when you are coping with cancer.

There may be times when you want to be left alone to sort out your thoughts and feelings. Tell others if there are times when you find it hard to talk.

It is also important to have conversations about things other than cancer. There will be times when you prefer to talk about everyday subjects such as friends, sport or TV. Or sometimes you may just want to sit quietly together. It is okay not to talk all the time.

We have more information about talking about your feelings on pages 23 to 27.

Listening

Listening is just as important as talking. We all like to feel we have been heard, especially when talking about something serious.

You may feel unsure about how to comfort the person you care for. But just listening to them when they want to talk can make a real difference. You do not need to have all the answers. Listening can be enough.

Listening and talking can help you both understand what the other person is feeling.

Tips for talking and listening

- Do not try to talk when one of you is busy or tired.
- Choose a time and place when you will be able to talk without being interrupted.
- Talking about feelings can be tiring. Set a limit on how long you will talk for. You could plan to do something nice together afterwards.
- When the person with cancer is talking, pay attention to what they are saying. Try to listen instead of thinking about what you are going to say next.
- Try to repeat back what you have heard. This helps you check you have got it right and shows you are listening. You might say things like, 'So you mean that...?'

We have more information about how to talk about your feelings and get the support you need on pages 23 to 29. We also have more advice on how to support someone with cancer in our leaflet **Be there for someone facing cancer** (see page 88).

There may be times when you want to talk but the other person does not. When this happens, talking to family members or friends may help you feel supported. It is good to have support from other people as well as from each other. You can also call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** to speak to one of our cancer support specialists. We are here 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm.

Write your feelings down

Writing about your feelings can help you express how you feel, if you find it difficult to talk. If you are worried about things, writing them down may help you stop thinking about them. It also helps you come back to them another time when you feel ready. You could try keeping a diary, blogging or using social media. You can also join our Online Community.

You can use the tool on the opposite page to write down how you feel and what makes it worse or better. We have written in an example.

**How I am
feeling today**

I am feeling angry

**What makes this
feeling worse**

Sitting on my own
and thinking

**What makes this
feeling better**

Going out for
a long walk

Looking after yourself

Be active

Regular exercise – even short walks – can help reduce stress. It can also help you keep fit. Exercising with others is a good way of getting out and spending time with people. You may want to join a class or a club. Find something you enjoy so you continue with it.

Keep to your usual routines

Doing familiar things can be reassuring and help you feel more in control. Try to stick to your usual routines as much as possible.

Keeping up with hobbies, interests and social activities can also help you cope. This might be hard to do if you are the main carer for someone with cancer. If this is the case, it is important to get some help. Our booklet **Looking after someone with cancer** has more information about getting support (see page 88).

Find ways to relax

Learning how to relax can help you cope with your feelings. You could try:

- deep breathing
- muscle relaxation exercises
- listening to relaxing music
- imagining yourself somewhere safe and calm
- physical activity, such as walking or swimming
- complementary therapies, such as massage therapy.

Some Macmillan centres offer free complementary therapies to people with cancer and their carers. Find your nearest Macmillan centre at [macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres) Some charities offer complementary therapies for people affected by cancer.

If you need help learning how to relax, talk to your GP. They can tell you what help is available locally. You can also buy relaxation books and CDs online. Some organisations have relaxation exercises that you can download from the internet (see pages 93 to 99).

'I lie awake at night panicking. I know she's often awake at night too, and I wonder what's going through her mind.'

Timéo

Be kind to yourself

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

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

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

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



TALKING ABOUT FEELINGS

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Talking about your feelings

When someone close to you has cancer, it may help to talk about what is happening and how you are feeling. Talking about your thoughts and feelings can:

- relieve tension by stopping your worries building up
- reassure you that your feelings are normal and you are not alone
- help you understand how you are feeling and why
- help you work out what is important to you
- help you find the answer to a problem
- allow you to feel closer to your family, friends or partner.

It is a good idea to talk to someone other than the person with cancer. This will take some pressure off both of you. The person you talk to could be a partner, close friend, family member or spiritual advisor. Or you may find it easier to talk to someone you do not know.

If your feelings are affecting your everyday life, talking to a professional may help. You can ask your GP about how to get counselling or see a psychologist. A counsellor or psychologist helps you talk about your feelings. They may also help you change the way you are thinking.

We have more information about talking about your feelings (see pages 23 to 27). Our booklet **Talking with someone who has cancer** also has more information (see page 88).

Macmillan Support Line

You can contact the Macmillan Support Line 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. You can call:

- to ask questions about cancer
- to discuss money worries
- for guidance about work
- simply for someone to listen to you.

If you feel upset or need emotional support when the Macmillan Support Line is closed, you can call Samaritans on **116 123**. It is confidential helpline is open 24 hours a day.

Counselling

Counselling can help you talk about your feelings. It is a type of talking therapy. At your appointment, you can talk to a trained counsellor who will listen and support you without judging you. Counsellors do not usually give advice or tell you what to do. The 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 may be offered a single session of counselling, a short course of sessions over a few weeks or months, or a longer course that lasts for several months or years. It can take a number of sessions, but you should slowly start to feel better with the help and support of your counsellor.

Counselling can happen:

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

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

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

You can call our support line on **0808 808 00 00** for more information about finding a counsellor. Or you can contact the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (see page 93).

'Talking to a counsellor every week helped me put my emotions into words. It enabled me to deal with my fears and frustrations, and gave me a sense of empowerment.'

Aurélie

Support groups

Most areas of the UK have cancer support groups for carers, partners, family members and friends. These are usually led by people who may be in a similar position to you, sometimes with support from a healthcare professional. A group usually includes people who have experience of different types and stages of cancer. You may find this helps you see your own problems from a different point of view.

Our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00** can tell you about support groups in your area, or you can find them on our website at **[macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups)**

Some people find groups very helpful and get support from other members. But others find it uncomfortable to talk about personal issues with strangers. Do not worry if support groups are not right for you. There are other ways to get support.

Online support

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

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

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

Our Online Community offers this type of support. It is quick and easy to join. You can talk to people in our chat rooms, blog about your experiences, make friends and join support groups. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)

Spiritual and religious support

Some people find that they have more spiritual or religious feelings during stressful times. This may be because they have questions about their faith and beliefs. Or it may be because they get comfort from their faith.

It might help you to talk to someone, such as a hospital chaplain or a religious leader. Even if you are not sure about what you believe, or do not worship regularly, you can still talk to them. Spiritual and religious leaders are used to dealing with uncertainty. They are usually happy to listen, talk and to give support and comfort.

Talking with the person who has cancer

It is natural for someone with cancer to have many feelings, such as fear, anger or frustration. Over time, the person usually finds ways to manage these feelings. Talking to other people can help with this. You can support the person with cancer by listening and talking with them. This is sometimes difficult, but there are things you can do to make it easier:

- Do not feel you have to talk about the cancer. Let your partner, family member or friend talk when they are ready.
- Do not feel you need to have answers. Listening can be enough.
- Try not to be thinking about what to say next. It is important to listen carefully to what the other person is saying.
- Repeat back what you have heard. This helps check you understand what they are saying and shows you are listening.
- Respect the other person's feelings. They might want to talk about things you find hard to hear.
- Try not to say that everything will be fine or encourage them to be positive. It can sound as if you are not listening to their worries. It is better to let people speak honestly about their feelings.

Dealing with difficulties

When you are supporting someone with cancer, you may both feel stressed. You may be angry or upset about the cancer, but this can be hard to express. People might express how they feel by getting angry or upset with the people closest to them. You may argue or find it difficult to talk to each other.

There are things you can do to help manage this:

- Try to understand each other's feelings.
- Ask the other person what they think or how they feel. It might be different to what you thought.
- Allow each other to talk, even if you disagree with what the other person is saying.
- Avoid words like never and always. For example, do not say 'You never listen to me,' or 'I always call you'. These words can make the other person defensive.
- Talk to the other person about how what they do makes you feel. Instead of saying, 'You are thoughtless – I have to remember everything', try saying, 'I feel stressed when I have a lot to remember'.
- Write down your feelings. This can help you think about what is important to you and help you deal with some of your worries.



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Telling other people

When you first find out that someone close to you has cancer, you may both need time to adjust before telling anyone else. This is normal.

Telling other people about the diagnosis can be hard to begin with. But it means that you can all get the extra support you need.

The person with cancer may find it hard to tell others. It is their decision when to share their diagnosis. But if you are close to them, you may also need support. Try talking to them about why it would help you to have support from other people. They might agree to you telling a close friend or family member. Or they might set a date for telling other people, for example after test results come back.

Contacting family members or friends after test results or doctor's appointments can be tiring. If you do not feel you can do this yourself, you could ask someone that you both know and trust to do it. Ask the person with cancer what they want other people to know.

You can also contact us for support. We are available to talk over the phone or online when you need us. Call us on **0808 808 00 00** or join our Online Community at **[macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)**

Talking to children about cancer

Deciding what to tell children about cancer is difficult. It can be hard to know what to tell them, and you may be worried about upsetting them. Children do not always show their feelings, but their behaviour may change at home or at school.

Talking to children about the cancer can:

- help them understand what is going on
- help them feel supported
- prepare them for any changes.

It may also help with some of your own anxiety too. For example, not telling them about hospital appointments may cause extra stress.

How much you tell children will depend on their age and how mature they are. It may be best to start by giving them small amounts of information, and then tell them more when they are ready. Teenagers usually understand what cancer is. Some will want to know more.

Whether they are teenagers or young children, talking about the cancer helps them cope.

Teenagers

It can help to encourage teenagers to ask questions, ask them their opinion and try to give them time to think about what is happening. They may have to, or want to, take on more responsibilities to help – perhaps cooking meals or looking after younger children. This can be hard at a time when they may want more freedom and independence.

Sometimes teenagers may find it hard to talk about a cancer diagnosis. You can encourage them to talk to someone they trust, who can support and listen to them. This might be a grandparent, family friend, teacher or counsellor. They may also find support online. The website riprap.org.uk offers information and support for teenagers who have a parent with cancer.

We have more information in our booklet **Talking to children and teenagers when an adult has cancer** (see page 88). We also have a video on our website about talking to children. Visit macmillan.org.uk/talkingtochildren



Getting support

When someone close to you has cancer, it is important to remember that you do not have to cope on your own. Think about the kind of help you might need from a partner, other family members, friends and neighbours.

Try making a list of things that you need help with. For example, you might need help with:

- shopping
- taking the children to and from school
- collecting prescriptions.

People often want to do something, but are not sure how to offer their help. They may be waiting for you to ask. If you seem to be coping, your family and friends may not realise how much you need their help.

Some people may be able to help regularly for a few hours a week. Others may prefer to help every now and again. If someone offers something that is not the support you need, it is okay to say no.

Some people may want to help with practical things. Others may be good listeners and let you talk about your worries. It is important to remember that you may need emotional support, as well as the person who has cancer. Having other people you can talk to can be really helpful.

You may find it helpful to use the communication plan on pages 40 to 41 to think about people who can offer you emotional and practical support.

Who could help?

Think about the people in your life who can give you emotional and practical support. These are people you can depend on and who you trust. They might include a partner, friends, family members, someone you work with or a health professional.

Communication

If there are lots of people involved in looking after the person with cancer, it may help to use a communication plan. Clear communication helps prevent confusion.

The plan could include:

- information that everyone needs to know
- who is doing each task
- who will speak to healthcare professionals, when they will do it and what they will ask.

Sometimes different people may speak to healthcare professionals. The person with cancer needs to tell their cancer team who they can share their information with.

You could use this communication plan to help you. We have written an example of the kinds of thing you may want to include. You can photocopy the plan and use it for different weeks.

Carers UK (see page 98) also has a free online and mobile app called Jointly, which you could use to co-ordinate things.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
Example	8am: Saffiyah taking the kids to school	1pm: Pat driving to day unit for chemo (tel 01...)	8am: Saffiyah taking the kids to school
Morning			
Afternoon			
Evening			

Date / /

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7pm: Stu taking Tamal to Scouts	9am: Stu calling physio to ask about exercises (tel 01...)	10am: Pat doing the ironing	4pm: Liz visiting

Making decisions

If your close friend, family member or partner has cancer, there may be lots of things you need to think about. These may include making decisions about work, money, managing the household or childcare. When you are making decisions, it is important to listen to each other.

We have more information about practical issues such as money and work on page 50 that you may find helpful.

Decision making tool

This tool (opposite) can help you and the person who has cancer think about the decisions you need to make.

The thinking tool was written by people affected by cancer. You can find more tools, stories and help using the tool at **thinkaboutyourlife.org** If you have any comments about this thinking tool, please email **cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk**

Decisions to be made	Who I want to be involved	Who makes the final decision



'When Amrik was diagnosed we wanted to educate ourselves, inform ourselves about what to expect from the treatment.'

Tarsim

Making treatment decisions

When someone close to you has cancer, they may want to talk to you about their treatment options. Their doctor may have spoken to them about different options. Talking to them about these choices can help you understand their thoughts and feelings. But any decisions about treatment will be theirs.

Finding out about cancer and treatments

Having information may make you or the person with cancer feel more in control. But remember, your information needs might be different from theirs. It can be useful to talk about how you can manage this.

Some people want to know as much as possible about the cancer and treatment. Others only want to know enough to make decisions about treatment and how to cope with it. Some people choose not to know very much at all.

It is best to let your family member, friend or partner find out information when they are ready.

You and the person with cancer can get information from different sources:

- If you would like to know more, you might find it useful to read our cancer information (see page 88).
- We have a list of other reliable cancer information websites (see pages 93 to 99). Not all information online is accurate.
- The best source of information about cancer treatment for the person with cancer is their healthcare team.
- Many hospitals have information centres. These provide face-to-face information and free booklets and leaflets (see page 88).

Going with the person to appointments is a good way for you to know what is happening. Before you go, ask them how much they want you to be involved. They may be happy for you to ask questions, but it is best to check in advance.

Doctors and nurses cannot give you any information without permission from the person with cancer. They can tell their doctor if they are happy for treatment information to be shared with named people. The doctor can then record this in their case notes. If the person with cancer is your partner, you do not have to be married or in a civil partnership to do this.

Having information about treatment may help you cope and support them better. Talk to the person with cancer if you think it would help. It may also be helpful for them, because:

- you could help them remember what the doctor said
- they could talk things over with you when making decisions
- you would know about possible treatment side effects they may have
- you could share information with family and friends (with their permission).

'Knowing about things puts my mind at ease and helps me cope. I couldn't have managed without Macmillan's website.'

Tarsim

Getting the right information

There is a lot of information available on the internet and in print. Some of this information can be wrong or misleading. There are a lot of incorrect beliefs about cancer and cancer treatment. It is important to get information that comes from a source that you can trust and is up to date.

When you are reading information, look for the Information Standard logo. This means that the information is based on up-to-date evidence and follows strict guidelines. You can see the Information Standard logo on the back cover of this booklet

You can get information from Macmillan. We have information in a range of formats about cancer, cancer treatments and living with cancer (see page 88). You can order our information by visiting **be.macmillan.org.uk** or by calling our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**.

You can also go to a local Macmillan information and support centre to talk to experts and trained volunteers. They can give you support and answer your questions. You can search for groups or cancer information centres near you by visiting **macmillan.org.uk/in-your-area**

'It's all rather confusing for us patients, but my attitude is to be practical and proactive about getting as much information as possible.'

Iain

If you disagree with a treatment decision

Sometimes you may not agree with your family member, friend or partner about treatment decisions. This can be hard for both of you. If this happens, you may find it useful to talk to the doctor or specialist nurse together. This may help both of you to understand all the options.

The person with cancer has the right to make their own choices. Try to accept this and support their decision. Sometimes this can be difficult. It may help to talk about your feelings with someone else. Your GP or the person with cancer's specialist nurse may be able to arrange for you to see a counsellor.

Work and money

If your close friend, family member or partner has cancer, you may want or need to give up work to look after them.

We have more information about your rights at work in our booklet **Looking after someone with cancer** that you may find helpful.

If you or the person with cancer need to work fewer hours, this can affect your household income. You may be able to get benefits and financial support.

Macmillan's welfare rights advisers can offer advice to people with cancer, their family, and carers. They can help with accessing benefits and other types of financial support. They can look at your individual situation and find the best solutions for you. Our booklet **Help with the cost of cancer** has more information (see page 88).

You can also speak to one of our financial guides. They can advise you on your financial situation and give information about insurance and pensions. Getting advice early on may save you a lot of time and worry. We have more information in our booklets **Insurance** and **Pensions** (see page 88).

Call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00**. You could also speak to your local Citizens Advice (see page 99).

After treatment

It might take time for your loved one to recover from the effects of treatment. They may feel tired for several months – this is normal. They may also have permanent changes to get used to.

It may take a while for both of you to deal with your feelings about everything you have been through.

Your partner, family member or friend may not need any more treatment because the cancer has been cured. Or they may be living with cancer and the possibility that they will need more treatment in the future.

If your roles changed during cancer treatment, they may slowly return to how they were before. Or you may want to do things differently.

We have more information in our booklet **Life after cancer treatment** that you might find helpful (see page 88).

If the cancer cannot be cured

If the cancer comes back or has spread, there may come a time when treatment cannot control it. Your family member, friend or partner may be told that they only have a while to live.

They may become ill over many months. Or they may become ill more quickly. It is not possible to know when someone may die.

Your feelings

Finding out that someone's cancer cannot be cured can be very difficult to cope with. It can be very hard for family members and friends, as well as the person with cancer. You will have lots of different emotions and may need support to deal with them. These feelings and emotions will also change over time.

'Not knowing whether it would be tomorrow, a week away, a month away or even a few years was one of the most difficult things to try and process.'

Lucy

You might find it hard to believe that the cancer cannot be cured. After a few days, the shock and disbelief may be replaced by other feelings. These may make it difficult for you to think clearly.

'After I realised I could talk to my close friends and family about my emotions, I felt so much better. I am slowly recovering from my mum's death with their help.'

Evie May

You might need some time with a partner, family member or close friend to cope with the news yourself. It may also help to talk to a counsellor. Macmillan's cancer support specialists can also provide advice and support. You can call them on **0808 808 00 00**. Or visit our Online Community at any time of the day or night at **[macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)**

Try to stay connected with the person with cancer and keep communicating. You can provide support and reassurance now more than ever.

If the person with cancer is not going to get better, you might have strong feelings about your relationship with them. It is important to try and keep your relationship as normal as possible. When you do not know what to say, a hug or holding hands can be very comforting.



'Though we'd had a very good relationship, I think it brought us much closer together and we could laugh over some of the things.'

Pat (left), whose husband David (right) was diagnosed with throat cancer

PARTNERS

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If your partner has cancer

When your partner has cancer, it can feel like everything has changed. You may have many different feelings (see pages 6 to 14), including shock, grief, anger and anxiety.

You and your partner will probably find your own ways of coping with your feelings. Even if you have different ways of dealing with the illness, try to understand and support each other.

You might try to protect them by not being honest about your fears and concerns. But talking about your feelings may make it easier for your partner to be honest about theirs. It may also help you understand each other and feel closer.

Here are some tips on how you can support your partner:

- Talk to each other about how you feel and what is important to you.
- Be aware that you may both have many difficult feelings and that these are all normal.
- Make time for each other. Do things you enjoy and talk about things other than cancer.
- Work out how you cope as a couple. For example, you might laugh or cry together to help release tension.
- Ask for support and accept help from friends and family members.
- Try to keep to routines. This can help life feel more normal.

Relationship changes

You may find your relationship changes because of the cancer. This may not happen straight away, but it can happen over time. Illness can add a lot of pressure to a relationship. It changes your lives and your plans.

Lots of couples feel more stressed than usual when one person has cancer. You may be coping with:

- difficult feelings (see pages 6 to 14)
- changes in your roles (see pages 58 to 61)
- making decisions (see pages 42 to 49)
- deciding what to tell other people, including any children (see pages 34 to 36)
- changes in your sex life (see pages 62 to 65)
- worries about money or work (see page 50).

Your partner might seem different. This could be because they are very stressed, in pain, or tired. You might find you argue more because of the emotions you are both feeling.

You may feel closer and that you love each other more. But not all relationships become stronger. Cancer sometimes causes relationship problems or makes any problems you have worse. A cancer diagnosis may show that your relationship is not as strong as you thought. If you have found it hard to talk through problems together in the past, you may find it more difficult to support each other through cancer. There are organisations that can help you with this (see pages 93 to 99).

We also have a video about the impact cancer can have on a relationship. Watch it at [macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/relationships/you-and-your-partner](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/relationships/you-and-your-partner)

Changes in your role

When your partner is diagnosed with cancer, the roles you have in your relationship may change.

During and after treatment, the person with cancer may not have the energy to do things they did before. You may have to do things your partner used to do. For example, this might include doing more work around the house or managing the finances. Or if your partner was the main earner, you may need to start working or increase your hours. This can be difficult for both of you.

If you have children, you will also be thinking about how the diagnosis may affect them and how to deal with this (see pages 35 to 36).

Making changes at work or at home can be tiring and may mean you have less time for other things. This may include social activities, work or spending time with family. This can lead to resentment, or you may feel guilty that you are not doing enough.

These changes can be hard for you and your partner. It is important to talk to each other about how you feel and what matters to you.

You may feel helpless or unsure about how to comfort your partner. You may also worry about how you will cope with caring for them.

These are normal reactions. Remember, although you have not been diagnosed, you are going through your own experience of cancer. It is okay to ask for help for yourself as well as for your partner.

Supporting your partner

Try to be yourself and live as normally as possible. Behaving differently may make your partner feel more aware of the cancer.

It can help to ask your partner what support they would like and find useful. This makes sure you help where it is most wanted and needed. It can also help you avoid misunderstandings.

Let your partner know that although you are there to help, they are still in control. Make a point of asking whether they need you to do something. Let them take as much responsibility as they can for their own care, and for family issues, finances and other decisions.

Supporting each other

You will have a lot to cope with. Many couples find it helps to work together as a team.

It may help to write down a list of priorities. Together, you can plan what things are most important and what help you might need. Try to find ways you can help each other so that you both feel cared for.

It is important to think about what support you can get from other people. Family and close friends often want to help. They may be able to help you with some everyday jobs you no longer have time for. We have ideas about getting support from your friends and family (see pages 38 to 41).

'Michael and I try and keep our sense of humour and have a laugh. You have to really as otherwise it's just all too depressing.

Veronica

Making time for you as a couple

Doing things that you both enjoy is a way of staying close as a couple. Many people prioritise the things they think they should do, such as household tasks. Because of this, they may not have the energy to do things that they want to do. But doing things you enjoy is just as important. It helps to balance out the impact of the cancer.

Make time to do things together that are not about the cancer. You may want to:

- go for a meal
- watch a film
- go for a walk
- take a holiday.

This can remind you what you like about each other and what brought you together as a couple.

'Although I know I need to enjoy the moment and the time we have together as a couple, I struggle with this.'

Rob

Your sex life

Cancer and its treatment may affect sex between you and your partner. But it does not have to mean you stop having sex or being intimate. Many people with cancer still have sexual feelings and enjoy their sex life.

If your partner is having treatment, you may both be tired or stressed. You might be focused on getting through the treatment. This can mean that sex, and being intimate, feels less important. But for some people, sex becomes more important.

If your partner has had surgery or is in pain, you may worry about hurting them during sex. Or you may feel guilty for wanting to have sex when your partner is not well.

Fears about cancer might put you off having sex. But cancer cannot be passed to another person through sex. And having sex will not affect how well a cancer treatment works.

Changes in your partner or in your relationship can also affect your desire for sex. Some people find it difficult to be a carer for their partner and still think about them sexually.

'While Michael's physical capabilities have been very affected, he's still emotionally who he's always been and that helps.'

Veronica

Possible effects on your sex life

Your sex life can be affected by:

- your partner having physical effects of cancer or its treatment
- how your partner thinks and feels about their body (body image)
- emotional changes in you or your partner, such as depression or anxiety
- changes in your relationship.

Some cancer treatments may directly affect the ability to have sex or orgasms. This can happen if a treatment affects the sex organs or their nerves and blood vessels. It can also happen if your partner has a treatment that affects the balance of sex hormones in their body.

Treatments that may have this effect include:

- hormonal therapy
- radiotherapy to the area between the hips (pelvis)
- surgery to the area between the hips.

We have more information on how treatments can affect sexuality and what can be done to help. You can order our booklets **Cancer and sexuality – information for men** and **Cancer and sexuality – information for women** (see page 88).

What can help?

There are different things you and your partner could do to help with your sex life:

- Talk to your partner about sex. Tell them what you would like and ask them to tell you what they would like. This can help you feel closer.
- Ask your partner if there is anything they are worried about, or do not want to do.
- If cancer treatment has caused sexual difficulties for your partner, encourage them to tell their doctor or specialist nurse. They may be able to suggest or prescribe things that can help. Sexual therapists can also help individuals or couples who have sexual difficulties.
- Make time for yourself and your partner. Spending time together doing things you both enjoy can make your relationship stronger. It can also encourage intimacy.
- If touch is important to you, use it to show how you feel about each other. Holding each other close or using massage are ways of physically showing your love.
- If there are things your partner cannot do or no longer enjoys, you may want to experiment sexually. You may find new ways to give and receive sexual pleasure.
- Your partner may feel self-conscious about how they look. Talking with them about this, and about how you feel about the way they look, may help them feel more confident. Encourage them to focus on the parts of their body that they like. Making love while partly dressed or keeping the lighting low may help.

There are organisations that can help couples who are having problems with their sex life (see pages 93 to 95). It is important to remember that no one is to blame. Although it can be difficult to talk about at first, most people find it helpful to get some advice and support.



If you or your partner identify as LGBT+

When your partner has cancer, you may worry about lots of things. If you or your partner identify as LGBT+, you may have extra concerns.

The cancer may make your relationship public for the first time. This may be when you and your partner go to hospital appointments, or when you are talking to their healthcare team. You might be worried that professionals will assume you are a same-sex couple or will not recognise you as a couple. It can be hard to know how to deal with this. If you are a same-sex couple, it might help for your partner to tell their doctor or specialist nurse about their sexuality. This may make it easier for you to go to appointments with them. You may both feel more supported if other people know about your relationship.

If your partner is trans, the cancer might bring up issues about a gender they do not identify as. This can be very difficult for your partner, and for you, to cope with. Talking to their doctor or specialist nurse about this can help.

When someone has cancer, it affects everyone close to them. Your partner's family will also be coping with different emotions. If there are already relationship problems, feelings of anxiety, anger and sadness can make them worse. There may be disagreements about who should be the main support or carer for the person with cancer. Or you may find the cancer brings you all closer together.

If you or your partner are not getting the support you need, it is important to remember that the law protects you. You should not be treated any differently because of how you identify.

Sometimes talking about these issues can help you cope. There are organisations that can offer support (see pages 94 to 95). You can also call us on **0808 808 00 00**. Our cancer support specialists are experts in supporting anyone who is affected by cancer. Or you could talk to people in the group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people on our Online Community (community.macmillan.org.uk/cancer_experiences/lgbt).





'I am her sister, so I saw myself as the closest person to her on this planet that was walking this journey with her.'

Janish (left), whose sister Venus (right) was diagnosed with womb cancer

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If someone in your family has cancer

When someone has cancer, it can affect the whole family. All families are different, and each family responds differently when someone is diagnosed with cancer.

Although all families deal with stress or tension at times, a cancer diagnosis may test a family in new ways. You may have many different feelings, including shock, grief, anger and anxiety (see pages 6 to 14). If there are already relationship problems, these feelings can make them worse. But cancer can also bring families closer together as they deal with the challenge.

It is important to be honest with each other about how you feel. Your family can provide emotional support. Talking to each other about what is happening can be an important way of helping you all cope. Not talking could cause tension.

Changes in your role

When someone in your family is diagnosed with cancer, the role you have and your relationship with the person may change.

During and after treatment, the person with cancer may not have the energy to do things they did before. You and other family members may have to do those things instead. Or you may have to adjust to new roles. These changes may mean you have less time for other things, such as social activities, work or spending time as a family.

If life is becoming very busy, it may help to write down a list of priorities. As a family, you can plan what things are most important. Try to split any tasks between family members so you can support each other.

It is important for the person with cancer to have a role, too. They may want to support other family members, as well as getting support themselves. You might find using a communication plan helps to organise everyone and prevent confusion. We have an example of this on pages 40 to 41.

If your parent has cancer

If your parent has cancer, you may find yourself looking after them for the first time. For example, you might help them wash or get dressed.

Having to care for your parent in ways you have not done before might cause lots of different emotions. For example, you may feel anxious, embarrassed or resentful. Your parent might feel these emotions too.

'I kept a diary on my laptop, as I found it easier to write about how I was feeling. I kept an account of all my emotions.'

Claire

It can help to share responsibility for looking after your parent with siblings or other family members. This can sometimes cause arguments about who does what or who makes certain decisions. It can help to split the responsibilities clearly, so each person knows what to do. You could use a communication plan (see pages 40 to 41).

If you need help with caring for your parent, there are organisations that can support you (see pages 98 to 99).

Young carers

If you are under the age of 18 and looking after someone with cancer, you are a young carer. It may be your mum or dad who has cancer, or your brother or sister. It could be a friend, grandparent, aunt or uncle. This can be very difficult and may affect your life in many ways. We have separate information for young carers in our booklet **A guide for young people looking after someone with cancer** (see page 88).





FRIENDS

If your friend has cancer

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If your friend has cancer

When a friend is diagnosed with cancer, you may have many different feelings. These may continue as your friend goes through treatment. If they are a very close friend, you might find their diagnosis particularly difficult to cope with.

Your friend may have support from their family or a partner. But you can support them too. Talk to your friend and find out how you can help. Perhaps you can do practical things, such as going to appointments with them or spending time together each week.

Your friend might need someone to talk to. They may find it easier to talk about certain things with a friend than with their family. Or they may welcome the chance to talk about normal things. You might talk about what has been happening at work or what you have been doing. You might worry about saying the wrong thing and so avoid certain topics. We have more information in our booklet **Talking with someone who has cancer** (see page 88) This may help you feel more confident about talking with your friend.

'Talking can be a challenge if you find it difficult to talk about or express your emotions. Try other things, like sending a card, writing a letter, email or text, or using images, art or music.'

Isabel

Your friend may not have a family supporting them, but they may have a big group of very supportive friends. This can sometimes cause issues if friends do not agree on what needs to be done and who will do it. If this happens, it might help for you all to sit down and talk with the person with cancer. You can discuss the situation and ask them what they want. You may find our communication plan on pages 40 to 41 a useful way of organising who does what. Even if you have difficulties, you might find you all appreciate each other more and become closer friends.

If your friend does not have anyone else to look after them, you may feel responsible for their care. It is not only partners or family members who become carers. If you provide a lot of support to someone with cancer, you may be a carer (see pages 75 to 85). This means you could get some support to help you do your caring role.

If your friend starts to need more help, you might feel pressured to do more for them. You do not have to do anything you do not feel comfortable with. Local authorities and health and social care trusts are responsible for arranging services that people need. We have more information about the help that is available on pages 81 to 82).

If you are a friend of someone with cancer, we are here for you. Call us on **0808 808 00 00** for information or support.

'I've got a wonderful web of very close friends around me. I think it has deepened those relationships. I can have conversations now that I wouldn't have probably had with them before.'

Aamina



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Are you a carer?

If you give unpaid support to a family member, partner, friend or neighbour who could not manage without this help, you may be a carer.

Caring can mean many things, including:

- being a good listener
- helping with personal care
- providing transport
- helping with everyday tasks
- talking to healthcare professionals on the person's behalf.

Many partners, family members and friends of people with cancer become their carer. There is more information in our booklet **Looking after someone with cancer** (see page 88).

Lots of young people are carers too. If you are aged under 18 and looking after someone with cancer, you are a young carer. There is more information in our booklet **A guide for young people looking after someone with cancer** (see page 88).

Getting support

As a carer, you may feel you have to do everything yourself. But there are lots of different types of support available. Try to accept help as much as you can. This can help the person you are caring for, too.

Help from family and friends

Getting practical help from your family and friends can make things easier.

It is helpful to think about the kind of help you might need from others. You could write a list of things people can help you with. This might be doing the shopping or collecting prescriptions.

You could stick the list on the fridge or carry it around with you. This will mean you are ready when people offer to help. You may find our communication plan a useful way of organising help (see pages 40 to 41).

Carer's assessment

If you are the main carer for a person with cancer, you can have an assessment of your needs. This is called a carer's assessment. It is done by a social worker. The assessment may help you get practical support. This could mean equipment to help with caring, or help from a paid carer. To arrange an assessment, contact your local social services, social work department or health and social care trust. You can find them in your local phone book or online.

Needs assessment

You can also help make sure the person with cancer has a needs assessment. This is done by a healthcare professional. It looks at all the types of support they may need for the cancer and any other issues it causes. Their healthcare team can arrange this.

Breaks from caring

When you are looking after someone with cancer, you might need to take time off caring to give yourself a break. If you do not, you could become very tired, stressed or unwell. These breaks are sometimes called respite care.

There are different ways to get respite care, including the following:

- Having a carer's assessment. This is to see if you can get services that allow you to have time away from caring.
- Contacting a carers' organisation that offers free respite care. They may be able to give you a temporary break from caring. They can also offer other support.

Sometimes, the person with cancer may not understand that you need a break. But it is good for both of you to have some time apart. You will have more energy when you return.

Call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00** for more information about getting respite care.

Making time for yourself

When you are looking after someone with cancer, it is important to look after yourself too.

Try to have regular breaks doing something you enjoy. This could just be going to the shops for an hour, going to the cinema or going for a walk. Try not to think about cancer during this time.

Keep doing the little things you enjoy, too. This will help you through any difficult times. For example, buy your favourite magazine each week and give yourself time to read it. Or make time to watch your favourite TV programme.

Make time to look after your own physical and mental health. Always talk to your GP if you have any concerns about your health.

'I sometimes wonder if the world is still out there. People ring me and call in from time to time, but some days I feel so cut off.'

Zeinab

Work and money

If you are working while looking after someone with cancer, this can cause extra stress.

You have rights at work that may make it easier to keep working while you are caring. These include:

- the right to ask for flexible working arrangements
- the right to take unpaid time off work in an emergency.

You may also be able to get financial support from the government.

We have more information in our booklets **Working while caring for someone with cancer** and **Help with the cost of cancer** (see page 88).

Your feelings

Looking after someone you care about can cause many different feelings and emotions. You may find that caring for your partner, family member or friend brings you closer together. But sometimes it can feel very difficult.

Try to talk about your feelings with your family or friends, or with the healthcare team. If you are very tired or stressed, talk to your GP. They may be able to suggest some things that could help.

We have more information about some of the challenges carers face and how they cope.

It may help to speak to other people in a similar situation. You could do this in the carers' group on our Online Community ([macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community)). We can also tell you about support groups in your area – call us on **0808 808 00 00**.



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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.

Online information

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

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

Other formats

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

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

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

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

Help us improve our information

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

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

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



Other ways we can help you

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

Talk to us

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

Macmillan Support Line

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

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

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

Information centres

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

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

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

Talk to others

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

Support groups

Whether you are someone living with cancer or a carer, we can help you find support in your local area, so you can speak face to face with people who understand. Find out about support groups in your area by calling us or by visiting [macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport)

Online Community

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

The Macmillan healthcare team

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

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

Mal

Help with money worries

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

Financial guidance

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

Help accessing benefits

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

Macmillan Grants

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

Call us on **0808 808 00 00** to speak to a financial guide or benefits adviser, or to find out more about Macmillan Grants.

We can also tell you about benefits advisers in your area. Visit **[macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport](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)**

Work support

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

Macmillan Organiser

This includes a records book to write down information such as appointments, medications and contact details. You can also download the app on IOS or Android.

Other useful organisations

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

Emotional and mental health support

Breathing Space

Helpline 0800 83 85 87

(Mon to Thu, 6pm to 2am, and Fri 6pm to Mon 6am)

www.breathingspace.scot

Free, confidential web and phone service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety.

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Tel 01455 883 300

Email bacp@bacp.co.uk

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

Lifeline

Helpline 0808 808 8000

(24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

Textphone 18001 0808 808 8000

www.lifelinehelpline.info

A helpline for people in distress or despair in Northern Ireland. Trained counsellors are available to help.

Mental Health Foundation www.mentalhealth.org.uk/podcasts-and-videos

The Mental Health Foundation provides free, downloadable podcasts designed to help people relax and improve their overall wellbeing.

Mind

Helpline 0300 123 3393

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 6pm)

Text 86463

Email info@mind.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk

Provides information, advice and support to anyone with a mental health problem through its helpline and website.

Samaritans

Helpline 116 123

Email jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org

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

LGBT-specific support

LGBT Foundation

Tel 0345 330 3030

(Mon to Fri, 10am to 10pm, and Sat, 10am to 6pm)

Email helpline@lgbt.foundation

www.lgbt.foundation

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

Stonewall

Tel 08000 50 20 20

Email info@stonewall.org.uk

www.stonewall.org.uk

Provides information and support for LGBT communities.

Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline**Tel** 0300 330 0630

(10am to 10pm everyday)

Email chris@switchboard.lgbt**www.switchboard.lgbt**

Provides confidential information and support for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and trans people and anyone considering issues around their sexuality or gender identity.

General cancer support organisations**Cancer Black Care****Tel** 020 8961 4151**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.

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.

Healthtalk

www.healthtalk.org

www.youthhealthtalk.org

Watch video and audio clips of people talking about their experiences of cancer and its treatments.

Maggie's Centres

Tel 0300 123 1801

Email enquiries@maggiescentres.org

www.maggiescentres.org

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

Penny Brohn UK

Helpline 0303 3000 118
(Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 5pm)

Email helpline@pennybrohn.org.uk

www.pennybrohn.org.uk

Offers 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

(Daily, 8am to 8pm)

Email info@tenovuscancercare.org.uk

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

Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland

www.hscni.net

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

NHS UK

www.nhs.uk

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

NHS Direct Wales

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

NHS health information site for Wales.

NHS Inform

Helpline 0800 22 44 88

(Mon to Fri, 8am to 10pm,
Sat and Sun, 9am to 5pm)

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.

Walking groups

Walking for Health (England)

www.walkingforhealth.org.uk

Funded by the Ramblers and Macmillan and supports local schemes across England to offer short, free walks. Visit the website to find a guided walk near you.

Paths for All (Scotland) **www.pathsforall.org.uk**

Established health walk groups across Scotland. The walks are all led by a trained volunteer and are less than an hour long. Visit the website to find a health walk near you.

Let's Walk Cymru (Wales) **www.letswalkcymru.org.uk**

Short walk groups designed to help people become fitter through regular walking. Visit the website to find a walking group near you.

Walking for Health (Northern Ireland) **www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/walking-health-groups-health-and-social-care-trusts**

Group walks led by trained volunteers that are available throughout Northern Ireland. If you are interested in finding out about walking groups in your area, contact the physical activity co-ordinator at your local health trust.

Support for carers

Carers Trust

Tel 0300 772 9600
(Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)

Email info@carers.org
www.carers.org

Provides support, information, advice and services for people caring at home for a family member or friend. There are details for UK offices and local support on the website.

Carers UK

Helpline (England, Scotland, Wales) 0808 808 7777

(Mon and Tue, 10am to 4pm)
Helpline (Northern Ireland)
028 9043 9843

www.carersuk.org

Offers information and support to carers across the UK. Has an online forum and can put people in contact with local support groups for carers.

Crossroads Care NI

Tel 028 9181 4455

Email info@crossroadscare.co.uk

www.crossroadscare.co.uk

Provides respite care, giving people a break from their caring responsibilities.

Crossroads Caring Scotland

Tel 0141 226 3793

Email info@crossroads-scotland.co.uk

www.crossroads-scotland.co.uk

Provides respite care, giving people a break from their caring responsibilities.

Support with advanced cancer

Hospice UK

Tel 020 7520 8200

Email info@hospiceuk.org

www.hospiceuk.org

Provides information about living with advanced illness. Provides free booklets and a directory of hospice services in the UK.

Financial or legal advice and information

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 in the phone book or by contacting:

England

Helpline 03444 111 444

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Scotland

Helpline 0808 800 9060

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland

Wales

Helpline 03444 77 2020

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales

Northern Ireland

Helpline 028 9023 1120

www.citizensadvice.co.uk

YOUR NOTES AND QUESTIONS

The page features a series of horizontal green lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a template for writing notes and questions. The lines are consistent in color and thickness, creating a clean and organized writing area.

Disclaimer

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

Thanks

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

With thanks to: Jilby Augustine, Macmillan Pastoral Care Worker; Sharon Clovis, Prostate Clinical Nurse Specialist; Roger Crellin, Macmillan Counsellor; Lorraine Grover, Psychosexual Nurse Specialist; Heather Jinks, Macmillan Specialist Palliative Care Social Worker; Dr Anne Johnson, Macmillan Consultant Clinical Psychologist; Kelly Leonard, Lead Urology Research Nurse; Pauline McCulloch, Colorectal Lead Nurse; and Helen Sanderson, Thinkaboutyourlife.org

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

We welcome feedback on our information. If you have any, please contact **cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk**

Sources

If you would like more information about the sources we use, please contact us at **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

This booklet is about coping with your feelings when someone close to you has cancer.

The booklet is for anyone who is close to someone with cancer, including partners, family members and friends. It gives suggestions for coping and getting the support you need.

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.

**MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT**
RIGHT THERE WITH YOU

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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.

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

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

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



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

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