

Independence

This information is about feeling more independent. If you have cancer, it may mean you have to deal with things that frighten and challenge you. Having cancer can make you feel less confident. You may feel you lost some of your independence during your treatment. Your role in your family or at work may have changed. These roles can be important to how you think about yourself. Your social life may have changed during and after treatment too. You may not be in contact with your friends as much as you were before treatment.

You may worry about what you are able to do and cope with. Or you may feel less comfortable or confident doing things that you found easy before. Physical changes caused by treatment can also affect your confidence.

For some people, work is an important part of life. If you find work difficult to cope with, you may need to take time off until you feel better. Or agree some reasonable adjustments. It can help to talk with your employer. You might also need help with extra costs. Or you might need financial support if you stop working.

Tips to help you gain independence

- Building your confidence takes time. You may find things improve as you start to recover from treatment. You may learn new ways of doing things for yourself again.
- Set yourself small goals that you know you can meet. For example, if your goal is a holiday, you could start with a day trip. It can be somewhere you know well and can travel to easily. You may only stay for a short time. The important thing to remember is that this is a step in the right direction.
- As you achieve small goals, your confidence will start to grow. Remember to notice every success, no matter how small it seems. You might want to celebrate or reward yourself somehow.
- During treatment and while you recover, you could ask friends or family for practical help and support. This could give you more time to rest or more energy. They may be able to help with household tasks, shopping and cooking. If you have children, you could ask someone you trust to take them to or from school or activities.
- You may require a needs assessment. This is done by a healthcare professional. It looks at all the types of support you need for the cancer and any other issues it causes. Your healthcare team can arrange this.
- Going back to work after treatment can feel very different. Your priorities can change. You may want to consider working part-time or returning to work slowly. Some people decide not to go back to work. Or they choose to do something different.
- Giving up work could affect your finances. This might include your income, pension and any employee benefits. If early retirement is an option, discuss it with your employer. For some people, it could be an advantage. But for others, it can leave them financially worse off.
- It is important not to take on too much, too soon. Your cancer doctor, GP or specialist nurse can help you decide when and if you should go back to work.

Local resources:

| Resource | Contact details |
|----------|-----------------|
| | |

National resources:

| Resource | Contact details |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Living • Disabled Living • Macmillan Work Support Service | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.independentliving.co.uk • www.disabledliving.co.uk Tel 0161 607 8200 • www.macmillan.org.uk/rightsatwork Tel 0800 808 00 00 (Mon to Fri, 8am to 6pm) |

Further information

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/your-emotions

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/organising/work-and-cancer

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/organising/your-finances

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on be.macmillan.org.uk

- **How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer**
- **Work and cancer**
- **Help with the cost of cancer**

More information and support

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

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these visit macmillan.org.uk/otherformats or call our support line.