

Loneliness and isolation

This information is about coping with feeling lonely and isolated. If you have cancer, it may mean you have to deal with things that frighten and challenge you. You may feel alone or isolated. This could be because you do not think you have support. Family and friends may live far away, be busy or feel uncomfortable talking about the cancer. You may feel lonely even when you are with other people. It may seem like no one understands what you went through. You might feel you have to be brave and not upset family and friends by talking about your feelings. Loneliness can be worse if you find it difficult to talk about your feelings.

Living alone can add extra stress. You may usually like being independent but being ill may make you feel lonely and frightened. If you are working, you may feel lonely if you or your colleagues are uncomfortable talking about cancer.

You may miss the routine of treatment, or the relationships you had with hospital staff. If your appearance has changed, you may be less confident about going out. These changes can be difficult to cope with, even if they are not obvious to everyone. Side effects such as tiredness may mean you do not go out as much as before. Your family and friends might not realise you feel lonely. Or they may think you want time to yourself.

Tips for managing worry, fear or anxiety

- Talking to other people about your feelings can help you feel less alone. Try to tell your family and friends how you feel. This can help them find ways to support you.
- You may have times when you want to be alone for a while. This is normal. But if you find you are avoiding people a lot of the time, try to talk to your doctor or nurse.
- Some people may find it difficult to support you emotionally but could help in practical ways. For example, people might be able to help you with shopping or household tasks. You could make a list of practical things that you want help with.
- Your GP, social worker, or community nurse can tell you what help and support is available from local health, social care and voluntary organisations.
- Marie Curie has a free helper service in some parts of the UK. Someone can visit you to have a chat or just be there to listen. Or they can help you get to an appointment, do the shopping or help with household tasks.
- Joining a self-help or support group can have many benefits. They give you a chance to talk to other people. These people may be in a similar situation to you. Talking to them can help you feel less alone.
- You could join an online support group or chat room. This might be helpful for you if you find it difficult to talk face to face.
- Some cancer centres and organisations run courses for people living with or after cancer. Your specialist nurse or cancer doctor may be able to give you information about courses in your area.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.ageuk.org.uk/services/befriending-services Tel: 0800 678 1602
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie Curie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/helper-volunteers Tel: 0800 090 2309
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness Tel: 0300 123 3393

Further information

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

www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups

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

- How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer
- Your feelings after cancer treatment
- Talking about 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.