

Thinking ahead when you have advanced cancer

It is common to have many different reactions and feelings when you find out the cancer has come back or spread after treatment. Some people may have a cancer that is advanced when they are first diagnosed.

If your cancer doctor has told you the cancer is advanced, you may feel shocked and find it hard to accept. You may feel frightened, angry or worried about the future. With time, these feelings can become more manageable. Some people find that making plans and decisions helps them feel more in control. Some people may live with advanced cancer for a long time – sometimes for years. During this time, many people carry on with their daily lives and do things that are important to them.

Uncertainty can be one of the hardest feelings to deal with, but there are ways to cope with it. You may always have some uncertainty. This is normal, but it can be hard. There are people who can help you manage your feelings.

Tips for thinking ahead

- Learning about the cancer and its treatment can make you feel more in control. It can help you understand your condition and make decisions. It can also help you feel more involved in your care.
- Many people with advanced cancer feel frightened. Often, talking about what may or may not happen can make it less frightening. You may find your fears are worse than the reality and that talking helps. Talking to a professional can also help you plan what might happen. This can help reduce fears.
- 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 or facing the same challenges. If you use the internet, you can join an online support group or chat room.
- You may find that your family and friends tell you to be positive. No one feels positive all the time, and it can be especially difficult when the future is so uncertain. It is fine to tell your family and friends that you know they mean well, but that it is hard to feel positive sometimes.
- You may want to think about what you want to happen if you become less well. For example, you may want to record your wishes about how and you want to be cared for. This is called advance care planning.
- Some people choose to make an advance decision to refuse treatment. It means making a record of any specific treatments you do not want to have and the circumstances when you would refuse them.
- You may also want to appoint someone who could make decisions on your behalf if you were unable to. This is called a power of attorney.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) Mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> www.bacp.co.uk Tel 0145 588 3300 www.psychotherapy.org.uk Tel 0207 014 9955 www.mind.org.uk 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**
- **Coping with advanced cancer**
- **Your life and your choices: plan ahead**

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.