

# Uncertainty

This information is about uncertainty. Uncertainty can be one of the hardest feelings to deal with. Not knowing what is going to happen might make you feel irritable, angry and frightened.

Feeling that we have some control over our lives makes us feel secure. This allows us to enjoy the things we do and plan for the future. But being diagnosed with cancer can take away that feeling of security. It can make you uncertain about what will happen.

You may find that doctors cannot answer some of your questions, or that you are unsure what their answers mean. For example, it is often impossible for them to say how well a treatment will work. Doctors may know the statistics for how many people will benefit from a treatment. But they cannot predict how it will affect you.

You will probably feel relieved when you finish cancer treatment. But you may also find yourself worrying about whether it has worked and what might happen in the future.

## Tips for coping with uncertainty

- 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.
- Ask your specialist nurse or cancer doctor where to find the best information. If you are not sure if something you have read is reliable, check with your nurse or doctor.
- Knowing what to expect after treatment may help you adjust and feel more in control. Your cancer team can give you advice on what you can do to help your recovery. Other healthcare professionals can also give you support and advice.
- Talking to someone about how you feel can help you cope with your emotions. It is often the first step in helping you feel better. Talking about things can make you feel supported. It can also help you make decisions that are best for you.
- 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.
- Doing something new can help distract and relax you. Some hobbies also help you express your feelings – for example, playing a musical instrument or painting.
- Going back to work or starting to do some of the things you did before treatment are important steps forward.
- You may decide to be more active. For example, cycling, yoga, dancing or joining a walking group. You do not have to be good at these activities to enjoy them. Look out for any groups or classes in your area. Find something you enjoy and feel comfortable with.
- Having something to look forward to can help you feel less worried and more positive about life.

**Local resources:**

Resource	Contact details

**National resources:**

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)</li> <li>• UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)</li> <li>• Mind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="http://www.bacp.co.uk">www.bacp.co.uk</a> Tel 0145 588 3300</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk">www.psychotherapy.org.uk</a> Tel 0207 014 9955</li> <li>• <a href="http://www.mind.org.uk">www.mind.org.uk</a> Tel 0300 123 3393</li> </ul>

**Further information**

[www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/your-emotions](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/your-emotions)

[www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups](http://www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups)

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on [be.macmillan.org.uk](http://be.macmillan.org.uk)

- How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer
- Your feelings after cancer treatment
- Worrying about cancer coming back

**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](http://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](http://macmillan.org.uk/otherformats) or call our support line.