

Work (employment)

Being diagnosed with cancer can affect all areas of your life, including work.

You may need time off work to have tests, appointments and treatments. You may also need time to cope with your feelings. It can be difficult to concentrate at work when you feel anxious, shocked or upset.

Some people stop working during treatment and for a while after, until they feel ready to go back. Others carry on working, perhaps with reduced hours or changes to their job. Working may give you a sense of normality and routine. You may also have friends and a social life at work that are important to you. Some people find it difficult to be off work for financial reasons.

After treatment, some people decide not to go back to work or to do something different. Others may not be able to return to work because of how cancer affects their health.

Tips for working when you have cancer

- Speak to your doctor about how any treatment and its side effects may affect your ability to work. This can help you make decisions about your work life.
- Find out more about your rights. The law considers cancer to be a disability and protects you from discrimination. You are protected from discrimination even if you no longer have cancer.
- Consider talking to your employer as soon as possible. If your employer knows about the cancer, they must make reasonable adjustments (changes) to help you keep working or return to work. This could mean time off for treatment, different working hours or extra breaks.
- Think about whether to tell the people you work with about your diagnosis. This gives them the chance to support you. But do not feel you have to share things if you feel uncomfortable.
- Ask your employer about their policies on sick pay, absence, occupational health and pensions. They can also tell you about any employee assistance programme that offers counselling.
- Ask your doctor for a fit note (statements of fitness to work). You need a fit note if you are off sick for more than 7 days in a row, including weekends and bank holidays. You need a fit note to get sick pay.
- If you are going to be off work for a while, agree how you will contact your employer.
- For help with money worries, call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00**. If you are taking time off work, you could get Statutory Sick Pay, company sick pay or Employment and Support Allowance. Depending on your income, you may be able to apply for other benefits.
- If you are returning to work, agree a return-to-work plan with your employer. This could include reasonable adjustments to the workplace or your job. For example, it may be possible to arrange a phased return to work, where you increase your hours slowly.
- Contact the government's Access to Work scheme if you need more support. This scheme can pay for special aids and equipment, or a support worker, to help you in the workplace. It can also cover travel costs to and from work if you cannot use public transport.
- If you are thinking about stopping work or taking early retirement, talk to a financial adviser. This is a big decision. You may be able to get an early payment from a private pension because of ill health. This depends on the rules of your pension scheme.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macmillan Work Support Service • Access to Work • Access to Work (Northern Ireland) • Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.macmillan.org.uk/rightsatwork Tel 0808 808 00 00 (Mon to Fri, 8am to 6pm) • www.gov.uk/access-to-work Tel 0800 121 7479 (Mon to Fri, 8am to 7.30pm) Textphone 0800 121 7579 • www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/access-work-practical-help-work • www.acas.org.uk Tel 0300 123 1100 (Mon to Fri, 8am to 6pm) Textphone 18001 0300 123 1100

Further information

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

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

- **Work and cancer**
- **Questions to ask about work and cancer**
- **Your rights at work when you are affected by 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.