Worry, fear or anxiety

Many people with cancer will feel worried and anxious about their situation. Feeling frightened and anxious is a natural reaction to an uncertain situation. Uncertainty can be one of the hardest feelings to deal with, and it may make you feel irritable, anxious and frightened.

Feeling that we have some control over our lives gives us a sense of security and allows us to enjoy the things we do. It’s natural to want to know what is likely to happen next, so that we can make plans for the future. But being diagnosed with cancer can take away that sense of security, and leave you feeling worried about what’s ahead.

Feeling frightened and anxious is a natural reaction to an uncertain situation. But if it affects your ability to cope with day-to-day life, help may be needed. Symptoms of anxiety may include not being able to concentrate, irritability, being easily distracted, restlessness and a constant feeling of dread.

You may also have physical symptoms including tense muscles, breathlessness, dizziness, sweating, a dry mouth, being unable to sleep, tiredness or digestive problems.

Tips for managing worry, fear or anxiety

• Talk to someone who can listen objectively. This may be your doctor, your nurse, your partner, a family member, a friend or a professional counsellor. You may also want to join a support group.

• Breathe deeply. Focusing on breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth can help you to feel calmer.

• Listen to music. Put on music you enjoy and close your eyes to feel calmer.

• Do physical exercise. Even a short walk can help relieve anxiety.

• Keep a diary. Working out what triggers your anxiety can help you manage those situations.

• Eat a healthy diet. Avoid stimulants such as coffee, tobacco and alcohol.

• Try a complementary therapy. Activities or treatments such as yoga, meditation, massage, reflexology may help you to relax and manage your anxiety.

If you feel that your anxiety is getting worse, or you start to have panic attacks, speak to your GP, specialist nurse or a counsellor. They can help you look at how your anxiety is affecting you and find ways of coping with it. You may also find it helpful to contact Anxiety UK.
**Local resources:**

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**National resources:**

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<td>Anxiety UK</td>
<td><a href="http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk">www.anxietyuk.org.uk</a>; Infoline: 08444 775 774 (Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 5.30pm); Text service: 07537 416 905; Email: <a href="mailto:support@anxietyuk.org.uk">support@anxietyuk.org.uk</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mind</td>
<td><a href="http://www.mind.org.uk">www.mind.org.uk</a>; Infoline: 0300 123 3393 (Mon to Fri, 9am to 6pm); Text service: 86463; Email: <a href="mailto:info@mind.org.uk">info@mind.org.uk</a></td>
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**Further information**

- MAC11593 How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer
- MAC11646 Talking about cancer
- macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/your-emotions
- macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups

**More information and support**

More than one in three of us will get cancer. For most of us it will be the toughest fight we ever face. And the feelings of isolation and loneliness that so many people experience make it even harder. But you don’t have to go through it alone.

Visit macmillan.org.uk or call us on 0808 808 00 00, Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm.

Hard of hearing? Use textphone 0808 808 0121, or Text Relay. Speak another language? We have telephone interpreters. We provide information in a range of languages and formats. Visit macmillan.org.uk/otherformats or call us.