

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. 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 make plans for the future. But being diagnosed with cancer can take away that feeling of security. It can make you uncertain about what will happen.

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, feeling short of breath, feeling dizzy, sweating, having a dry mouth, being unable to sleep, feeling tired or digestive problems.

Tips for managing worry, fear or anxiety

- If you feel like talking, talk to someone who is a good listener – this may be a friend, partner or family member, your doctor or nurse, or a professional counsellor or psychologist. You may also want to join a support group.
- 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.
- Think about your breathing – breathing in slowly and deeply through your nose and slowly out through your mouth can help you feel calmer.
- Put on music you enjoy and close your eyes – this can help you feel calmer.
- Do some physical activity – even a short walk can help with anxiety.
- Keep a diary of what makes you anxious – this can help you identify situations that make you feel anxious and avoid them if possible.
- Eat a healthy diet. Avoid stimulants such as coffee, tobacco and alcohol.
- Try activities or treatments such as yoga, meditation, massage or reflexology – these may help you relax and manage your anxiety.
- Having something to look forward to can help you feel less worried and more positive about life.

If you feel your anxiety is getting worse, speak to your GP, specialist nurse or a psychologist or counsellor. They can help you find ways of coping. Many people who have anxiety may also have depression. Speaking to your healthcare team is the best way to get the help you need. You may also find it helpful to contact Anxiety UK.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.anxietyuk.org.uk Infoline 08444 775 774 Text service 07537 416 905
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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
- 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

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.