

In partnership with

**MACMILLAN**  
CANCER SUPPORT

easy  
read

# Having surgery





# About this easy read booklet



This booklet is about having surgery.



You can learn about what will happen when you go to hospital for surgery.



If you are worried about your health, you should talk to a doctor or nurse.



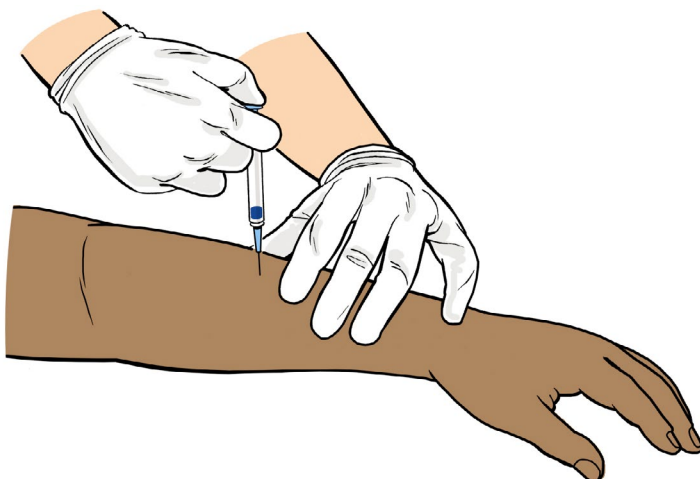
# Having minor surgery



Surgery means having an **operation**. An **operation** is when a doctor removes, replaces or fixes something inside your body.



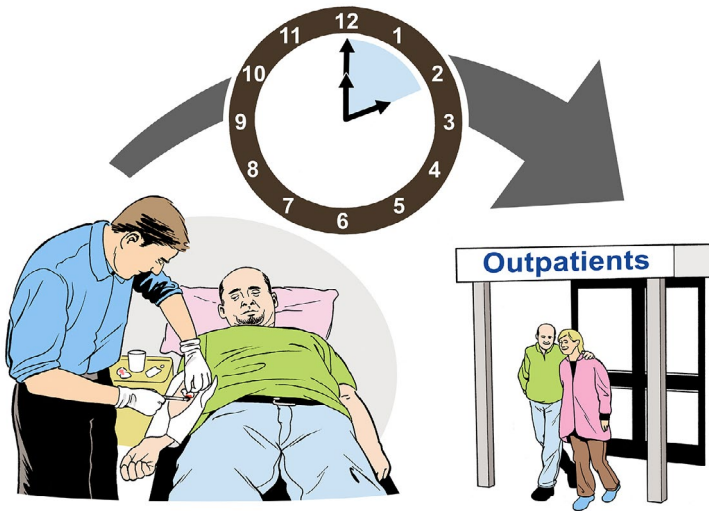
**Minor surgery** means having small operation. You will be awake but the doctor will give you medicine so you do not feel anything.



The medicine is usually given as a small **injection**. It is done on the part of your body where you will have the surgery.



An **injection** is when a needle is put through your skin. The medicine is pushed into your body through the needle.



Minor surgery is normally quick and simple. You can usually go home a few hours after the operation.



## Having major surgery

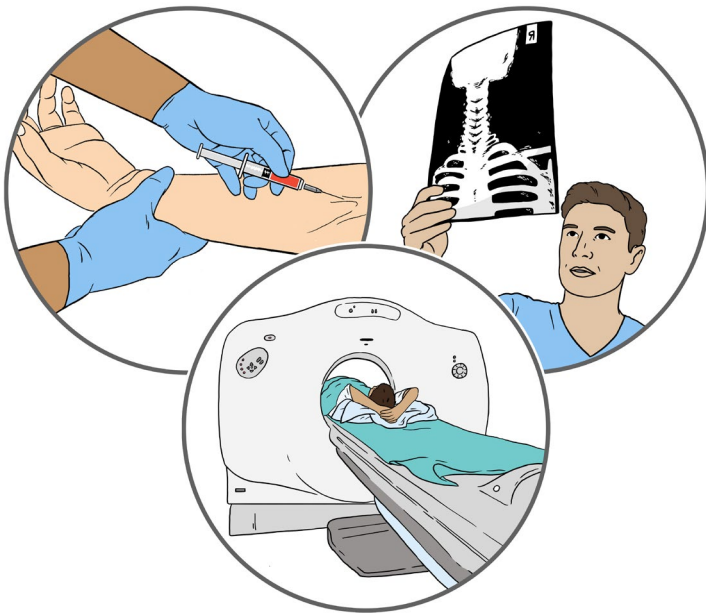


**Major surgery** means having a bigger operation. Your doctor will give you medicine to make you sleep. You will not feel anything.

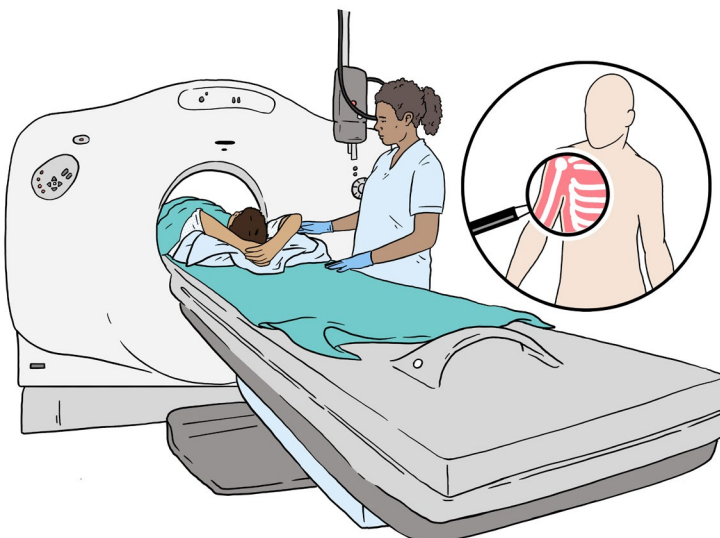




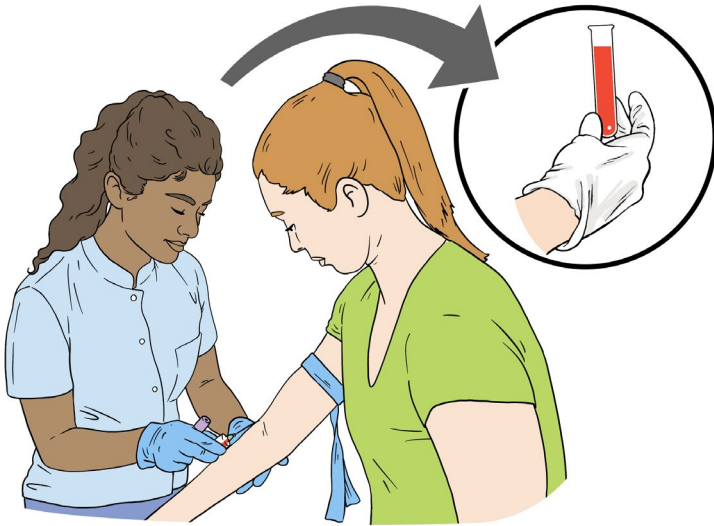
Before major surgery your doctor may want you to have some tests. This is to make sure it is OK for you to have the operation.



The tests can include **scans**, **x-rays** and **blood tests**. There may also be other types of tests.



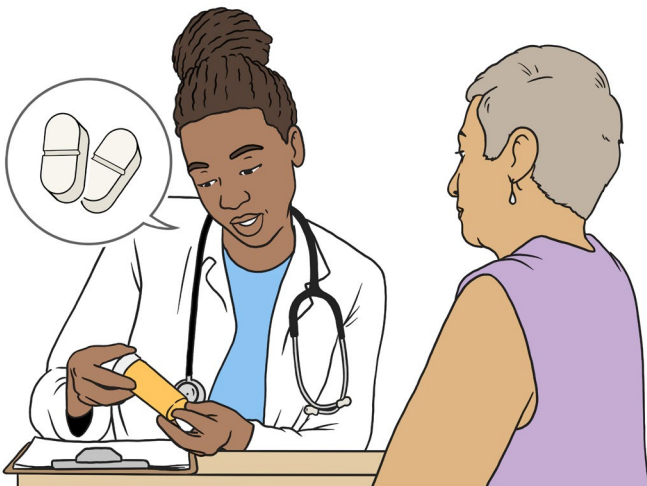
**Scans and x-rays** are ways of taking photos of the inside of the body.



**Blood tests** are when a doctor takes a small sample of your blood and tests it for different things.



Your doctor will ask you about any medicines you take.



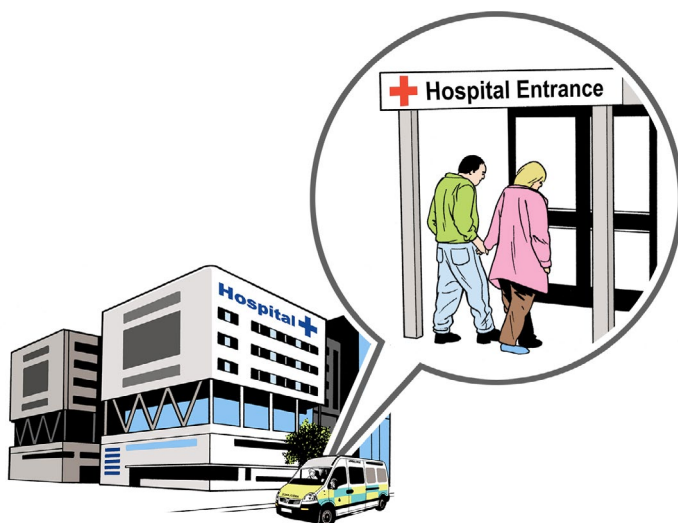
You may need to change how you take your medicines before you have your operation. Your doctor will tell you what you need to do.



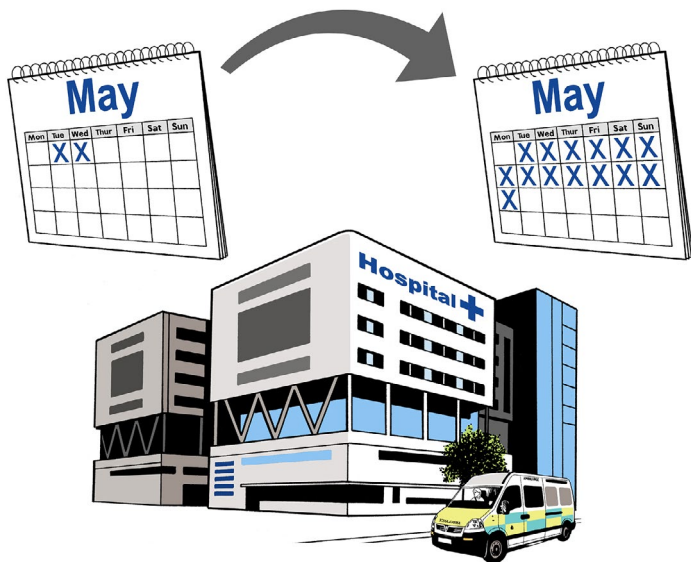
Usually you must not eat or drink anything for a few hours before major surgery.



Ask the doctor what time you have to stop eating and drinking.



When you go for major surgery you will need someone to come with you. They can support you and stay for as long as you need them.



After major surgery, you stay in hospital for at least a few days. Sometimes you stay for a week or two.

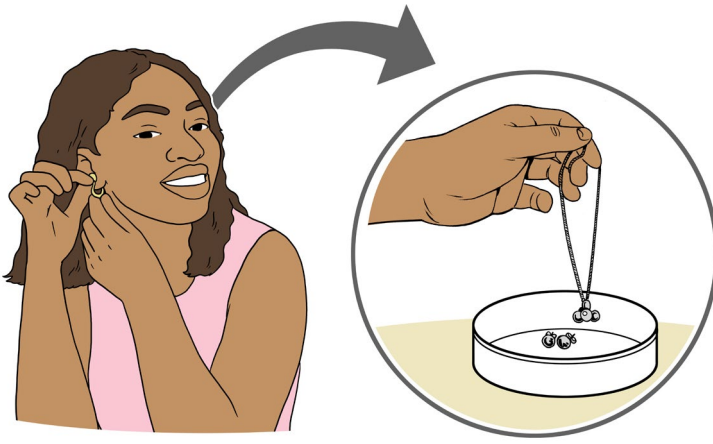


Pack a bag to take into hospital. You may need your medicines, toothbrush, washing things, slippers, and your phone and charger.



Pack or wear some loose clothing. This will be easier and more comfy to wear after your operation.





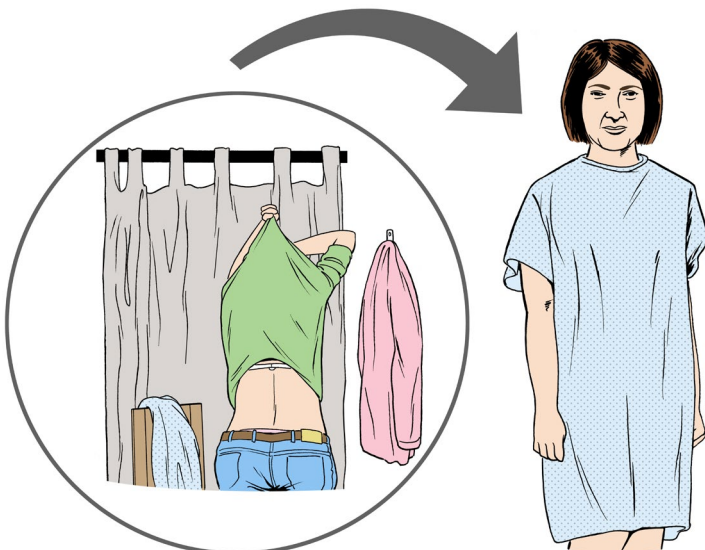
Leave any jewellery at home where it will be safe. You cannot wear it during the operation.



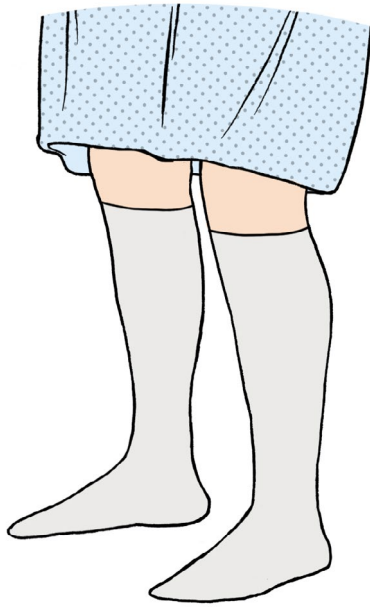
## The day of your operation



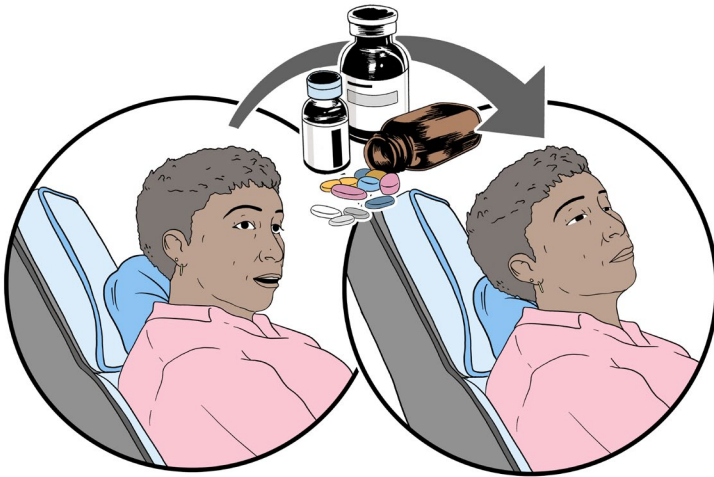
A doctor called a **surgeon** will do your operation. They are specially trained to do surgery. Other doctors and nurses will also look after you during and after your operation .



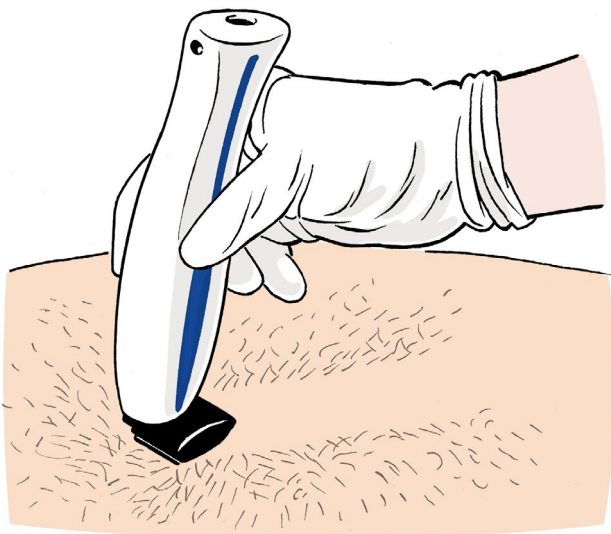
Before the operation, a nurse will ask you to you take off your clothes and put on a hospital gown.



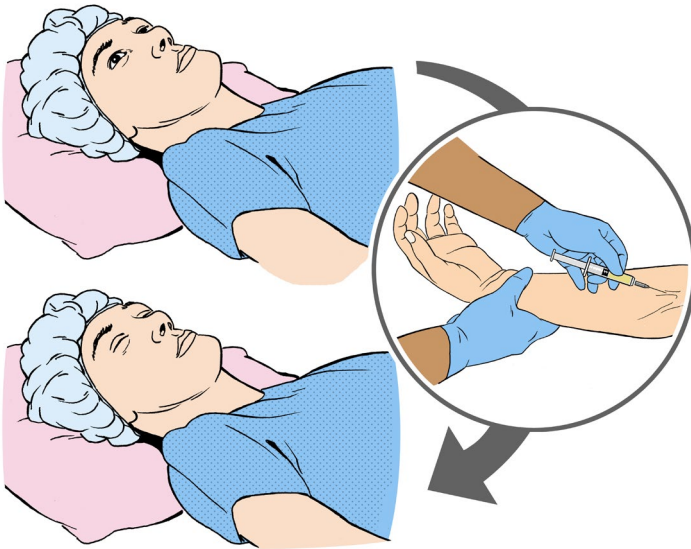
Your nurse may give you long tight socks to wear. You wear these during and after the operation. They help the blood move around your body.



Your doctor or nurse may give you medicine to help you relax.



Your nurse will clean the part of your body that is going to be operated on. They may shave it too.



For major surgery, you be given medicine to make you sleep. This is called a **general anaesthetic**.



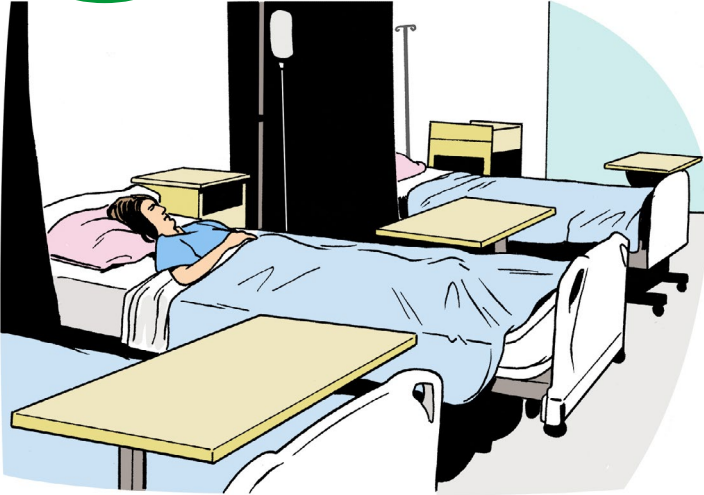
When you are asleep, the doctor puts a breathing tube in your mouth. This will be taken out before you wake up.



The surgeon does the operation while you are asleep. You will not feel anything.



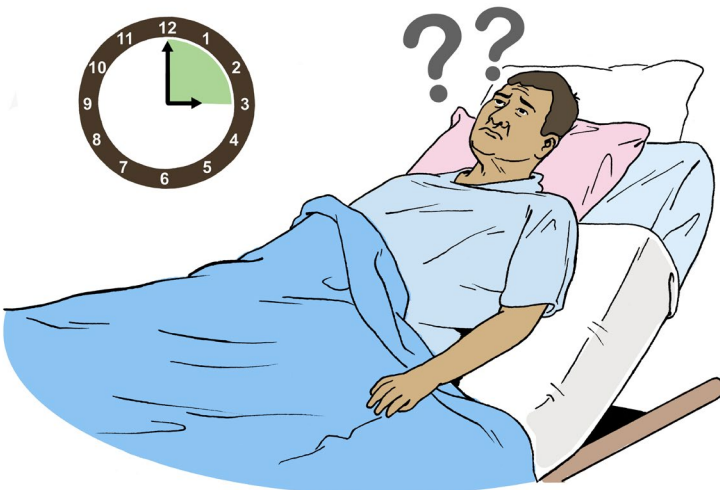
# Recovering after surgery



After surgery you will be taken to a recovery room. This is where you are looked after until you wake up.

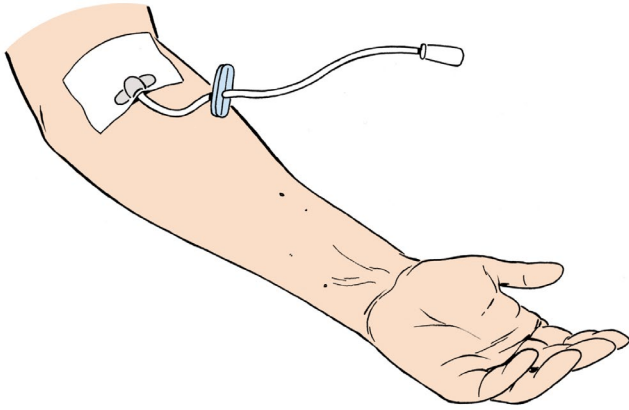


You will feel sleepy when you wake up after a general anaesthetic.



You may feel confused and may not remember much in the first few hours after you wake up.

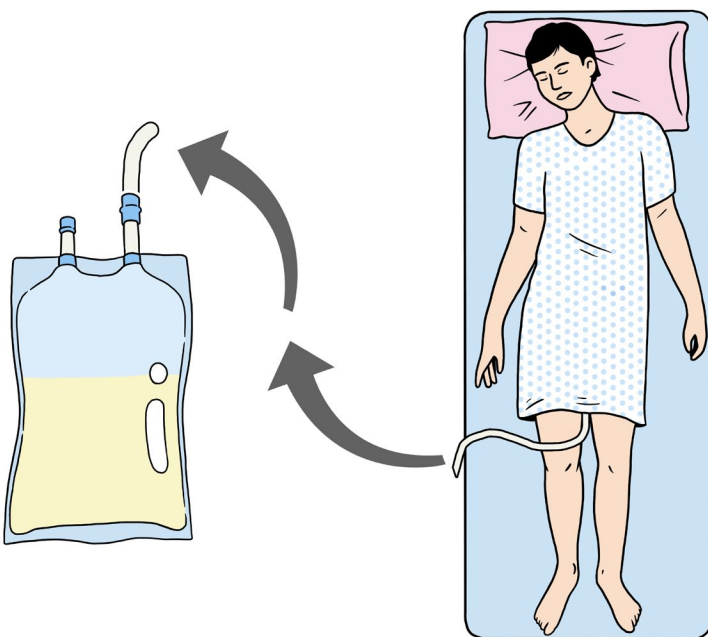




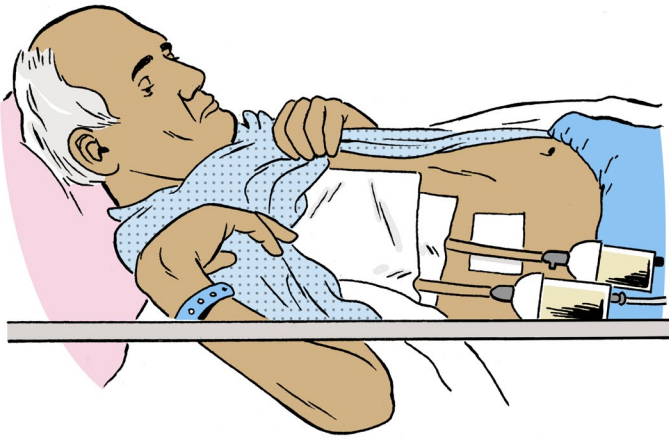
You may have some tubes attached to you when you wake up. The tubes each do a different job:



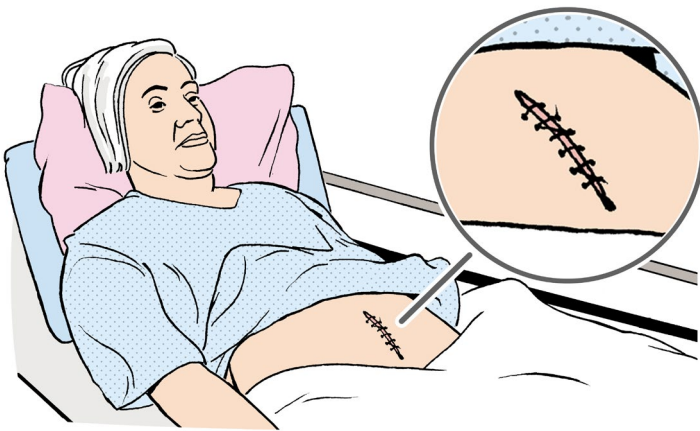
- You may have a tube in your arm or hand. This gives you fluids and medicines until you can eat and drink.



- You may have a tube coming out from where you pee. This is called a **catheter**. Your pee comes down this tube into a bag. This means you can pee without going to the toilet.



- You may have a tube coming out from where the operation was done. This is called a drain. It collects any fluid from your **surgical wound**.



A **surgical wound** is a cut in the skin where an operation was done.



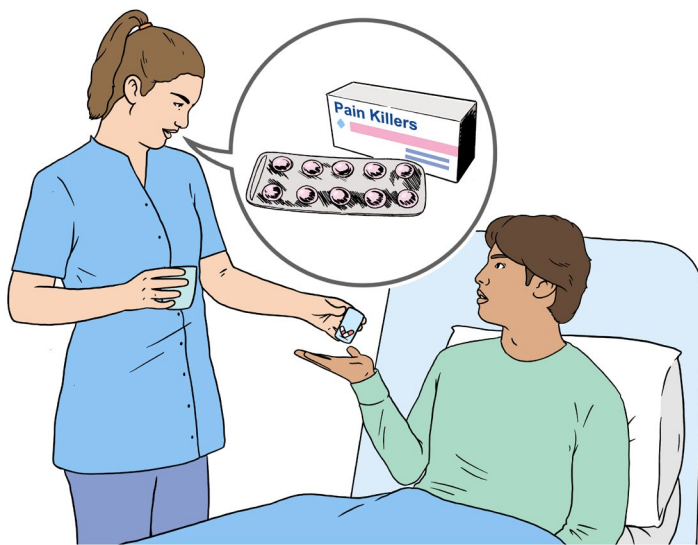
## Side effects



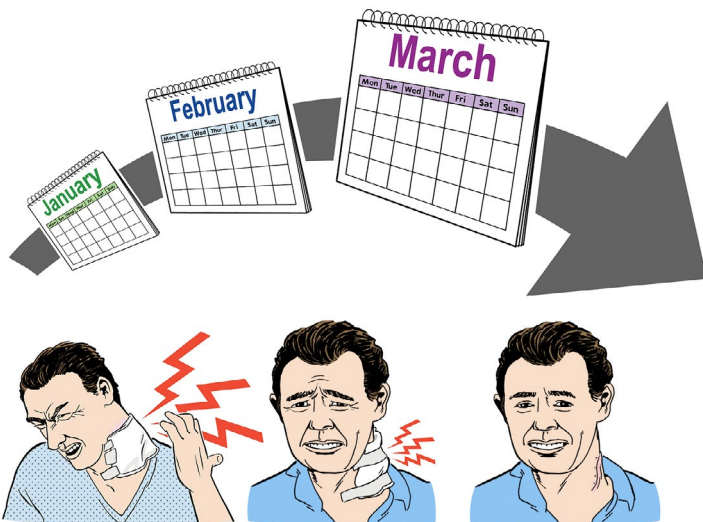
There are sometimes **side effects** after surgery. **Side effects** are things that happen in your body because of the surgery.



Pain can be a side effect. You will usually have some pain after an operation.



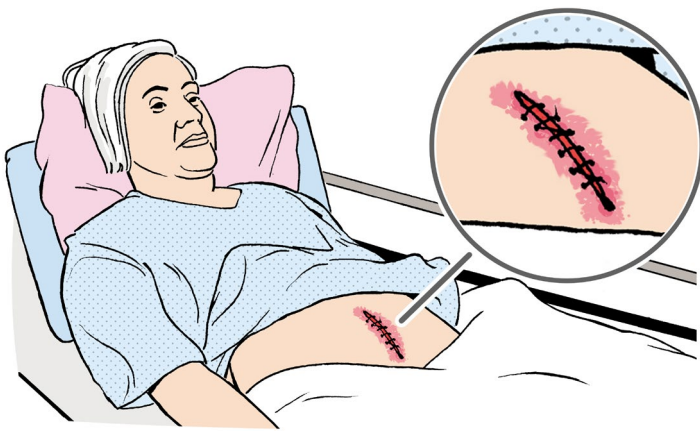
It is very important to tell your nurse or doctor if you are in pain. They can give you medicine to help.



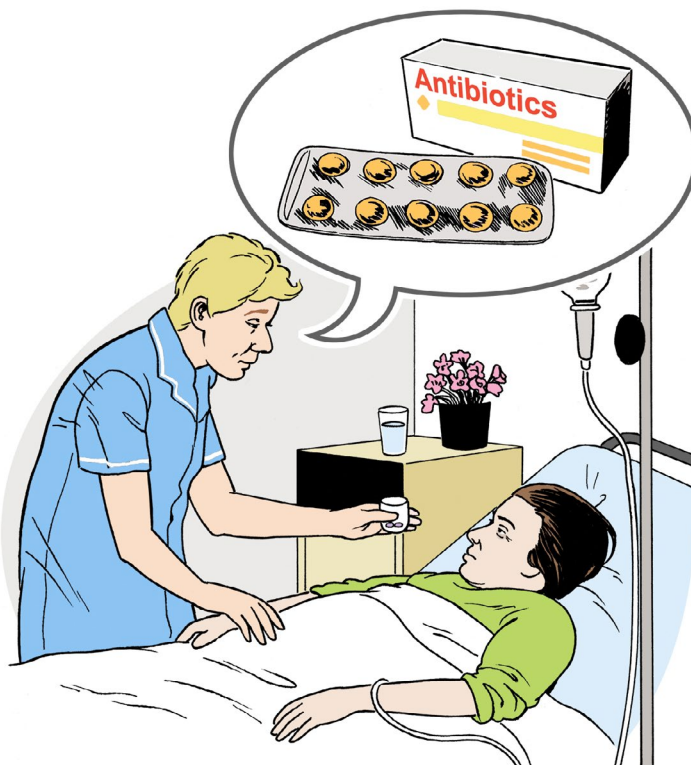
Any side effects you have should slowly get better as you heal.



Tell a nurse or doctor straight away if your surgical wound is hot, painful, bleeds or leaks any fluid. This means your wound may have an **infection**.

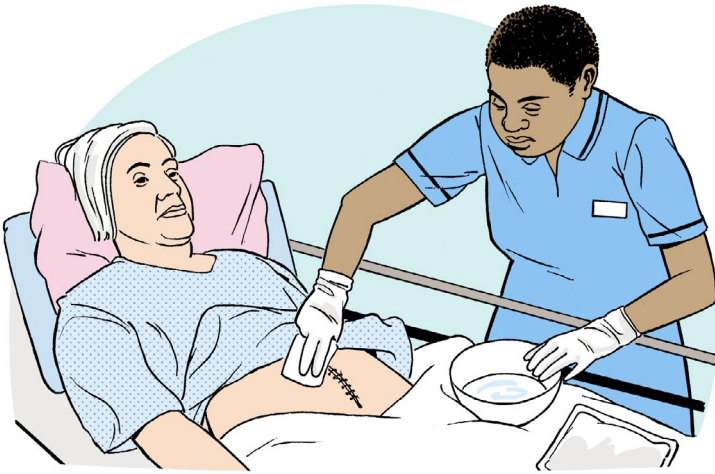


An **infection** is when your body is attacked by a bacteria or virus. Infections are side effects that cause you harm and might make you feel unwell.



If your surgical wound becomes infected the doctor may give you some antibiotics. These are medicines that stop infections in your body.





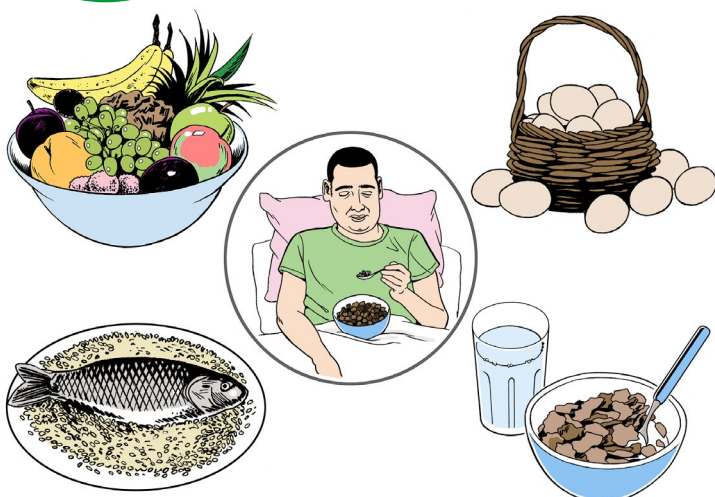
It is important that your wound is kept clean. If you have a bandage that covers your wound, a nurse will change this to keep it fresh.



When you go home, a nurse may come to visit you to check your wound or change the bandage.



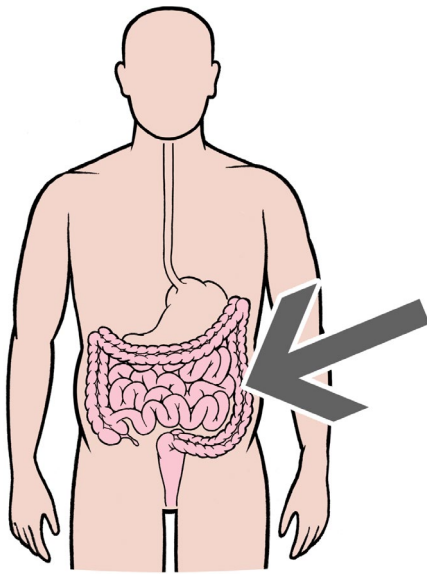
## Diet after surgery



Before and after surgery you will need to eat healthy food. This helps your body to heal.



Some operations can make eating uncomfortable. For example, this can happen after operations on your stomach, throat or **bowel**.



The **bowel** is inside your body. It is a long tube which helps digest food.



If you have any problems eating or drinking after surgery, talk to a doctor or nurse. They can make sure you get any help you need.



# How Macmillan can help you



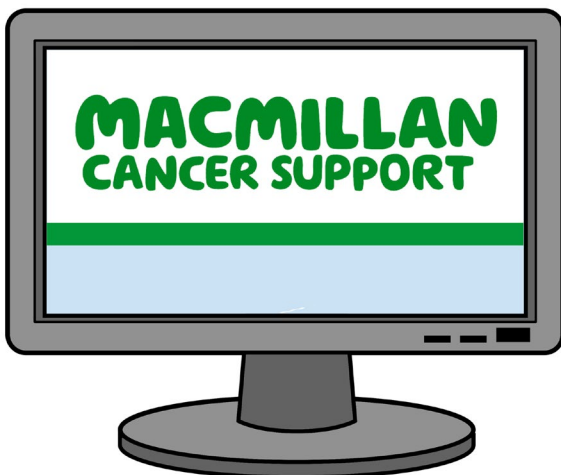
You can get support from:

## The Macmillan Support Line

Call **0808 808 00 00** 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm.

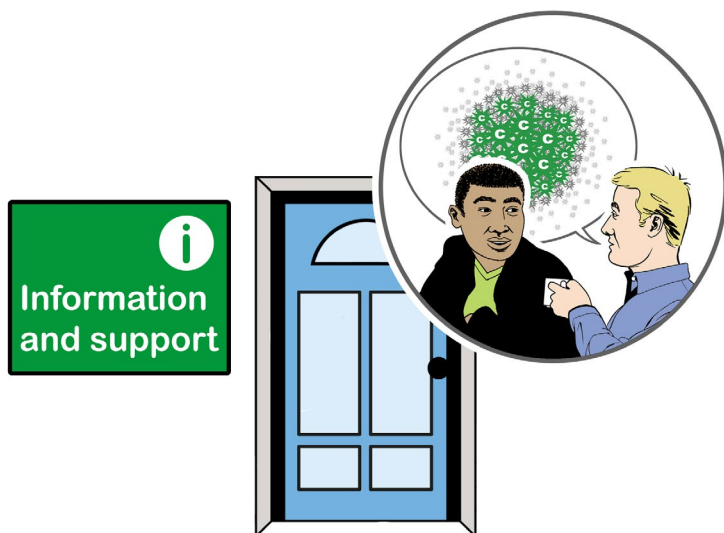


You can speak to us in your language, including British Sign Language (BSL). Just tell us what you need when you start the call.



## The Macmillan website

Visit **macmillan.org.uk** for information about cancer. You can also use our web chat to ask questions at **macmillan.org.uk/talktous**



## Information centres

You can talk to a cancer support specialist and get written information. Find your nearest centre at

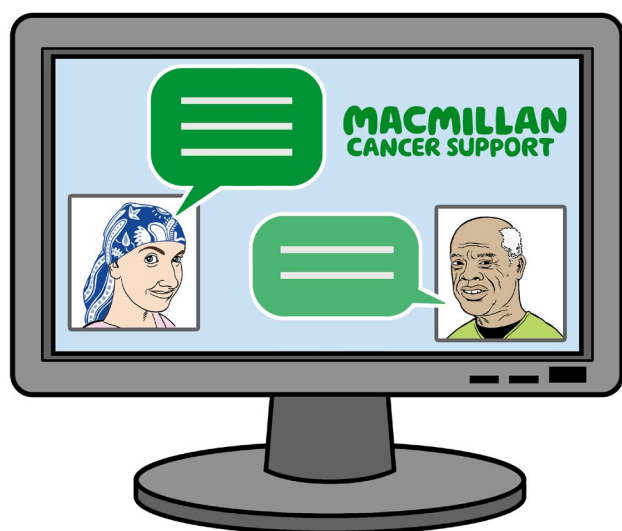
[macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres](https://macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres) or call us.



## Local support groups

Find a group near you at

[macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups](https://macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups) or call us.



## Macmillan Online Community

You can talk to other people in similar situations at

[macmillan.org.uk/community](https://macmillan.org.uk/community)





Macmillan can give you information in different ways:

### Booklets about cancer

You can order booklets about cancer from

[orders.macmillan.org.uk](https://orders.macmillan.org.uk)



### Videos

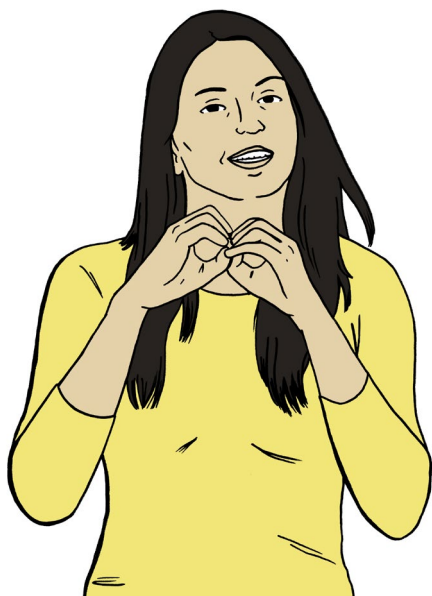
You can watch videos about cancer at

[macmillan.org.uk/videos](https://macmillan.org.uk/videos)



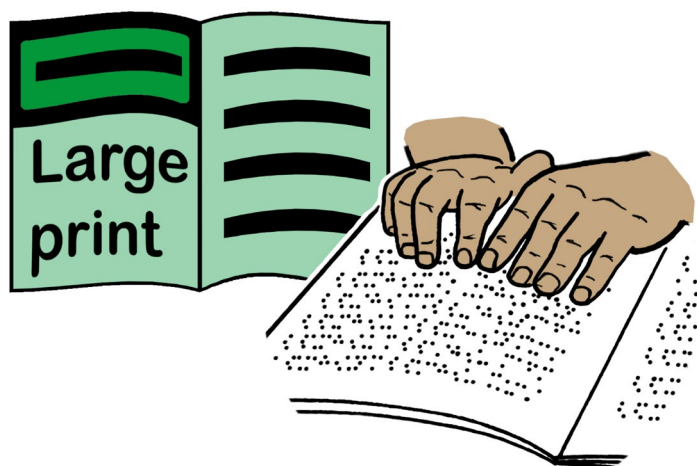
### Audio

You can listen to information about cancer and order CDs from [macmillan.org.uk/audio](https://macmillan.org.uk/audio)



### British Sign Language (BSL)

You can watch information in BSL at [macmillan.org.uk/bsl](https://macmillan.org.uk/bsl)



### Large print or Braille

Tell us if you need information in large print or Braille.

Email: [informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk)



### Translations

Tell us if you need information in another language.

Email: [informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk)



# More easy read booklets



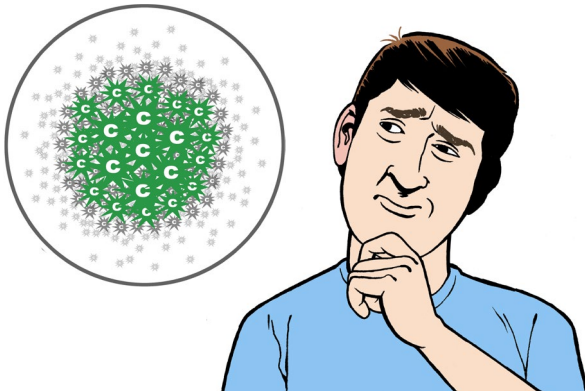
Order more easy read booklets from [macmillan.org.uk/easyread](https://macmillan.org.uk/easyread)

There are booklets on lots of topics:



## About Macmillan

- How Macmillan Cancer Support can help you
- Holistic Needs Assessment (HNA)



## About cancer

- Lung cancer
- What is cancer?



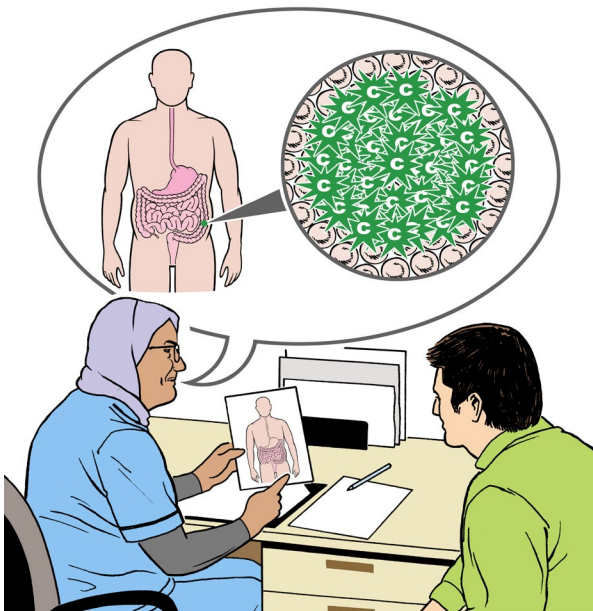
## Signs and symptoms

- Breast care and screening
- Cervical screening (smear test)
- How to check your balls (testicles)
- Signs of cancer
- Symptoms of cervical cancer
- Symptoms of prostate cancer



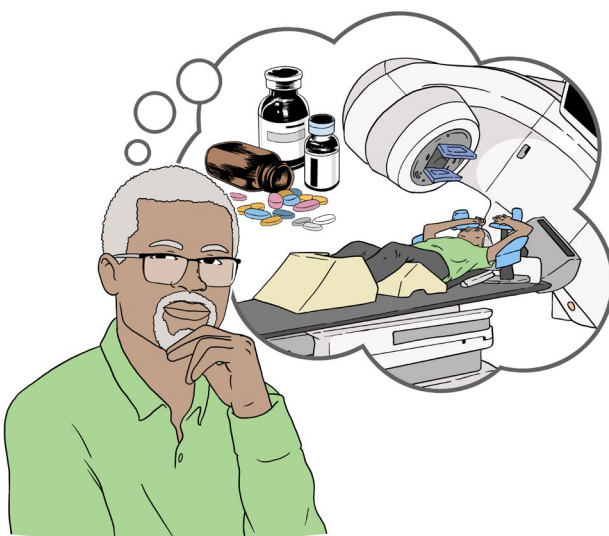
## Tests for cancer

- Having a biopsy
- Having a colonoscopy
- Having a CT scan
- Having an endoscopy
- Having examinations and blood tests
- Having an MRI scan
- Having an ultrasound
- Having an x-ray



## Being told you have cancer

- Finding out you have cancer
- Getting your test results
- Seeing the doctor



## Deciding on your treatment

- All about me – notes for my healthcare team
- Deciding about treatment
- How to get equal healthcare
- If you are unhappy with your care





## Treatment for cancer

- Chemotherapy
- Giving your consent
- Having surgery
- Radiotherapy
- Side effects from chemotherapy
- Side effects from radiotherapy
- Treatments for prostate cancer



## Living a healthy life

- Be safe in the sun
- Drink less alcohol
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise
- Have safer sex



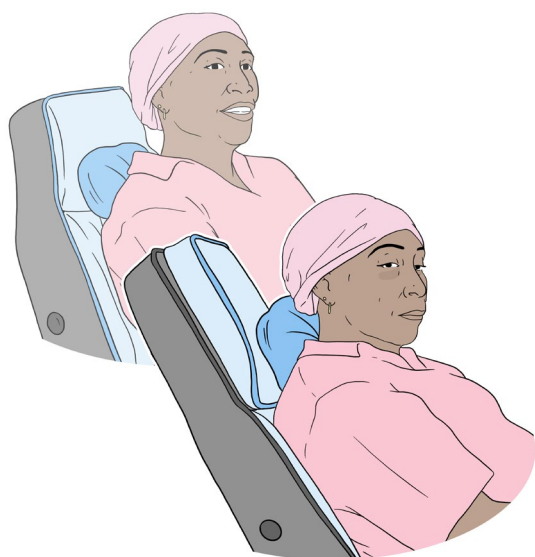
## Living with cancer

- Claiming benefits when you have cancer
- Complementary therapies
- Help with costs when you have cancer
- LGBTQ+ people and cancer
- Talking about cancer and your feelings



## Living with cancer

- What happens after cancer treatment ends
- Work and cancer
- Your sex life and cancer
- Your social life and cancer



## End of life

- Changes that can happen at the end of life
- Choosing where to die
- Things you can do when getting ready to die
- Thinking about your funeral
- Who can help if you are dying
- Your feelings when you are dying



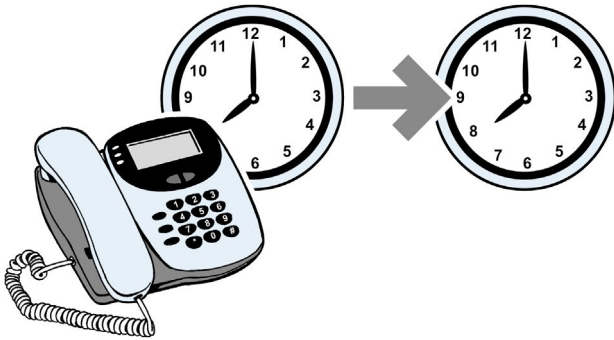
## After someone dies

- Going to a funeral when someone dies
- Your feelings when someone dies and what can help

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This booklet is about having surgery.

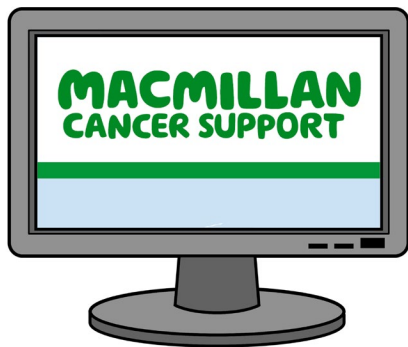
It is for anyone who finds easier words and pictures helpful. If you have more questions about cancer or would like to talk to us, call the Macmillan Support Line.



- Call us free on:  
**0808 808 00 00**  
7 days a week from 8am to 8pm.



- If you use a textphone, you can call:  
**18001 0808 808 00 00**



- Or go to the website:  
**[macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)**

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