

Sadness or depression

When you have cancer, you may feel sad at times. You may feel this way at diagnosis, during or after treatment. This is normal, and for most people these feelings of sadness go away.

But for some people, a low mood may continue or get worse. This may mean they have [depression](#) and need help or treatment to be able to cope. Depression is common and can be caused by different things. It may be related to the cancer, or it may happen for other reasons.

It can be difficult to know whether you are sad and worried about the cancer, or whether you have depression. Sometimes other people notice your symptoms and suggest that you [might need help](#). Symptoms of depression are different for each person. They can include:

- feeling low in mood or sad most of the time
- losing interest in things you used to enjoy, like your hobbies or social life
- changes in sleeping, eating or concentration
- feeling helpless or vulnerable
- problems starting or finishing tasks
- thinking about self-harm or suicide.

Tips for coping with sadness or depression

- It is normal to have some of these feelings at times. But if they go on for more than a couple of weeks, talk to your cancer doctor, GP or specialist nurse
- If you are sad or depressed, it may help to make sure you get enough sleep, eat well and keep active. You could also try doing things you enjoy and being with people you like.
- If you find it hard to make the effort to do these things, try to do one small thing at a time and celebrate your successes.
- Many people get support by talking to close family members or friends. Or you could join a support group or online community.
- Talking one-to-one with a trained counsellor can help you sort out your feelings. Your GP can give you details and make a referral.
- If you think you might have depression, speak to your GP. They can talk to you about your feelings and help you find ways to cope. They may suggest ways of managing the depression including talking therapies, such as counselling, medication or a combination of both.
- If you are frightened by your feelings and emotions, or if you are becoming very depressed, you can get help from a healthcare professional. This could be from your hospital healthcare team, your GP, a mental health professional, a local charity or organisations such as Macmillan.
- If you have any thoughts about self-harm or suicide, you should contact your cancer doctor, GP or specialist nurse straight away.

Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on be.macmillan.org.uk such as:

- [How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer](#)
- [Talking about cancer](#)
- [Your feelings after cancer treatment](#)
- [Your feelings and cancer – easy read.](#)

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line.

Further Macmillan 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 where you can [chat online](#) to one of our team.

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.

Or if you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find others who understand on our [Online Community](#).

Our free [Macmillan Buddy service](#) can arrange weekly phonecalls or videocalls with a friendly volunteer who understands what you're going through.

Other useful contact details

- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) – visit www.bacp.co.uk
- Help to Overcome Problems Effectively (HOPE) – a licensed programme developed by Coventry University and Macmillan Cancer Support to help people who have or have had cancer to get on with their lives – visit <https://learnzone.org.uk>
- Mind – visit www.mind.org.uk or call **0300 123 3393**
- UK Council for Psychotherapy – visit www.psychotherapy.org.uk

Notes and questions
