

Young people with a relative or friend with cancer

This information is for young people who have a relative or friend with cancer. It aims to help you understand and cope with your situation, and offer ways of finding help from health professionals, local services, national organisations or books. Two thirds of children aged 10-17 know somebody affected by cancer and nearly half have a family member with the disease.

Coping with how you are feeling

When someone in your family has cancer, things can change for everyone. You may find people in your family react differently and have different ways of coping. You may be feeling scared, angry, guilty, lonely, neglected, embarrassed, anxious or confused.

Remember that feelings aren't 'good' or 'bad', they are just feelings and they are normal. Many other people in your situation feel the same way. Accepting these feelings and talking about them is a good way of coping through sharing, but if you find it hard to talk, try writing down how you feel or draw a picture of your feelings instead.

Support and Sharing

It can be hard to talk about cancer. It's possible that the person who has cancer may not be ready to talk when you are. Maybe some of your questions are upsetting to them because they don't know how to answer or maybe your worries remind them of their own. You may like to find someone else you can talk to as well.

It can be useful to think about your own 'support circle' of people who could help you such as: grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbours, teachers, school counsellors, religious leaders, youth club workers, older siblings or friends your own age. There are also special organisations which may be able to help, listed in the table overleaf.

Information

Worrying about cancer and the treatments and tests can be hard. Having accurate information about the type of cancer your friend or relative has and the treatment they are having can help you feel less confused and scared about what is going on.

Sometimes talking with your friend or relative about what it is really like is the best way to deal with these fears. If they agree, it may be helpful to visit the hospital with them. You may also find it helpful to talk to one of the health professionals involved in your friend or relative's care, or to one of the staff at a support and information centre like the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre (LJMC).

There are also many good sources of information available on the internet, some of which are listed overleaf. It is a good idea to talk with someone about any information you find in order to check its accuracy.

You might want to ask questions like:

- What kind of cancer is it and where is it?
- What kind of treatment will be used?
- How long will the treatment go on for?
- How do people feel having this treatment?
- Will they get better?
- What will happen to me while they are having treatment?
- What can I do to help?

Contact	What they provide	How to contact
General Practitioner (GP) (Family Doctor)	Your main contact if you are feeling unwell or worried and anxious.	Name: Tel:
Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre (LJMC) Mount Vernon Hospital Northwood Middlesex HA6 2RN	Information on cancer, treatments, side-effects and on any issue associated with cancer for patients, carers, family and friends. Local / national support. Answerphone out of hours	Drop in Centre 9.30am - 1pm + 2pm - 4.30pm Helpline: 01923 844014
Riprap Website	A website developed specifically for teenagers who have a parent with cancer. Stories from other young people going through the same situation. Information, tips and help via the web.	www.riprap.org.uk (appears to be a useful site for young people which is regularly monitored by responsible adults)
The National Cancer Institute, USA	Information, help & advice for those with a parent who has cancer. Advice on what questions to ask.	www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo/
Hospice of St Francis Spring Garden Lane Off Shootersway, Northchurch Berkhamsted Herts HP4 3HX	Support for children and teenagers who have a relative in the hospice.	01442 862960 www.stfrancis.org.uk
Canceri Grove House, Waverley Rd St Albans AL3 5QX	Support for children & teenagers. The family support team includes social workers, counsellors and play therapists.	Family Support Services 01727 843401
Isabel Hospice Griffin House, Watchmead Welwyn Garden City AL7 1LT	Support for children and teenagers, when a family member has cancer. Group work and family meetings. 1 to 1 sessions (for people been in our care).	Family Support Team 01707 330686 www.isabelhospice.org.uk
North London Hospice 47 Woodside Avenue North Finchley. London N12 8TF	Support for children and teenagers who have a relative in the hospice.	Social Work Team 020 8343 8841
The Peace Hospice Peace Drive Off Cassiobury Drive Watford Herts WD17 3PH	Support for families including children and teenagers affected by cancer.	01923 330330 www.peacehospice.org.uk
Link 1st Floor Fountains Mill 81 High St, Middlesex UB81JR	Information and counselling service for young people aged 14 - 25, who live, work or study in the London Borough of Hillingdon.	01895 238884
Signpost 114 The Parade Watford WD17 1AU	Information and counselling for ages 11 - 25. Mobile (for text or calls) for young people. Also provide short-term therapies for parents of young people. Drop-in sessions (Saturdays 10am-12 noon)	01923 239495 Signpost Mobile 07904 708540 email: signpostcounsellingagency@gmail.com
Macmillan Cancer Support Youthline & website	Support for 12 - 21 year olds - for those diagnosed with cancer or caring for a relative or friend. Free and confidential. Website for young people.	Youthline: 0808 808 0800 Mon - Fri 9am - 9pm www.whybother.org.uk www.macmillan.org.uk

Book	Description	How to obtain
'When someone has a very serious illness' By Marge Heegard.	Offering children ways of coping with loss through art.	Woodland Press ISBN: 0-9620502-4-5
'The secret C: straight talking about cancer' by Julia Stokes	For ages 5-14. Simple question + answer explanations of cancer, treatments & side-effects. Looks at emotions which may be experienced when someone you know has cancer.	Winston's Wish / Macmillan Cancer Support ISBN: 0-953912302 www.macmillan.org.uk
'When your mum or dad has cancer' by Ann Couldrick	For ages 6-12. A booklet about the importance of involving a child if a parent has cancer, to help them make sense of it.	Sobell Centre Oxford 01865 225896