

June 2024

Being diagnosed with cancer is likely to cause lots of worries and fears not just for yourself but also for your loved ones. It's scary, and you may be having all sorts of thoughts, including which treatment will I need, will I die, how will I look after my family, will I be able to work, how will I pay the bills, or you may just feel numb and not be able to think of anything. Everyone is different. You may feel out of control and experiencing high levels of pain.

When going through cancer treatment, it's not just your body which is affected; it will also put a strain on your mental health. Having lengthy and intensive treatment can dominate your own and your families lives. Worrying about the future, having to attend many hospital appointments, and maybe undergoing operations, not knowing how you're going to feel each day, and even telling people that you're going through treatment, can make some people very anxious.

Feeling anxious is an understandable response to the trauma you're going through. The symptoms of which vary and may include an accelerated heart rate, trembling, nausea, muscle tension, inability to relax and insomnia.

## Recovery

When it comes to recovery, thinking about your mental health is as important as getting well physically. So, don't ignore your worries and make time to talk them through. Ensure you have a good support network of loved ones around you, as this is beneficial to your overall mood and progress. It's also important to seek support from your GP or healthcare professional if you need it. Some cancer survivors develop [PTSD](#), which will require specialist treatment.

Having cancer can be very hard to cope with. When you are trying to cope with an illness there is no right or wrong way to feel. Everyone is different and you will deal with things in your own way. Cancer Research UK have produced information [here](#) on how to cope emotionally with your illness.



## Self-care

Your recovery is about you, so you should make yourself the priority. Keeping up a good, but gentle health regime will help. Making sure you're getting the right nutrition, getting a good night's sleep and doing the things you enjoy in between treatment sessions is vital and can really make a difference.

You may struggle to do exercise but getting outside in nature and going for a short walk each day, can help reduce your anxiety levels and boost your mood.

Feeling sick and tired after treatments is very common, so it can be hard to maintain a varied diet. Foods like soups, or easy to eat and digest foods like bananas are a good option. It's vital to keep your body hydrated with water, which may help combat any feelings of nausea or fatigue.

Where you can it's important to live as normal life as you can whilst going through treatment.

Of course, cancer recovery is not necessarily straightforward. There will be dark, painful and sad days, but worst of all, there will be scary days. The main thing to remember is to use the support available to help get you through, and to make yourself the priority.

For more information on managing cancer symptoms and possible side effects from treatment, including pain, sickness, and diet problems. Cancer Research UK have produced a 'Coping Physically with Cancer' guide, click [here](#) to read.



## Signs and symptoms of cancer

Spotting cancer at an early stage saves lives, so tell your doctor if you notice anything that isn't normal for you. If you do notice any changes, it's important to speak to your GP as soon as you can.

There are over 200 different types of cancer that can cause many different signs and symptoms. Here are some of the more general cancer symptoms:

**Fatigue** – there are times in our lives when we feel more tired than usual, especially if you are going through a stressful time. But if you feel tired all of the time or for no reason, it may be a sign that something is wrong.

**Unexplained bleeding or bruising** – unexplained bleeding or bruising when you haven't hurt yourself if you are coughing up or vomiting blood or if there is blood in your poo or wee.

**Unexplained pain** – persistent or unexplained pain anywhere in the body could be a sign of something more serious.

**Unexplained weight loss** – a noticeable loss of weight over a short period of time.

**Unusual lump or swelling** – lumps or swelling in any part of your body should be taken seriously.

**Fever or heavy night sweats** – unexplained fevers or night sweats.

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, you should contact your GP.

Signs and symptoms are often caused by something less serious than cancer, but if it is cancer, spotting it early can make a real difference.

You don't need to try and remember all the signs and symptoms of cancer. Listen to your body and talk to your doctor if you notice anything that isn't normal for you.

## Supporting a loved one living with cancer

When someone close to you is diagnosed with cancer it may feel overwhelming and you may struggle to know how you can help and support them. Explain this to them and ask them how you can best support them.

Regularly reach out to them, send them text messages, give them a call, meet them for a coffee or dinner. Remember even though they are going through treatment, they are still the same person.

If you are a close family member and can be physically present to support them, offer lifts to appointments or even to attend appointments together if allowed. Offer to sit in on telephone appointments or help them to organise their treatment schedule.

If you have the time to offer practical support, for example, offer to do the food shopping, the ironing or walk the dog.

While someone suffering from a long-term illness may not want to be overcome with bunches of flowers, there are lots of other gifts you can send that may help to brighten their day or give them the boost they need. These could be items to help them sleep like pillow sprays, body creams or nutritious food items or a nice treat, like chocolate.

If you are part of a wider family or group of friends, it may be worth arranging who will do what, so as not to overload your loved one but to ensure they receive regular contact from you all.





## Police Mutual Services

Worrying about money can be extremely stressful and may lead to mental health conditions. Police Mutual are here to help.

We've teamed up with [PayPlan](#)\*, one of the UK's leading free debt advice providers, who offer free and confidential advice to anyone in serious financial difficulties.

They're able to advise you on a range of debt solutions suited to your individual circumstances, helping to protect you and your family with a sustainable way to manage your debt.

Get free and confidential help to combat your debt, call [PayPlan](#)\* on **0800 197 8433**.

Our Care Line Service provided by Health Assured can offer advice and information, helping with a range of concerns including emotional support. Take a look at the e-portal or download the APP.

## Wisdom App



Download the [Health Assured App](#) and register today - your code is **MHA107477**



To read more of our wellbeing guides take a look at the wellbeing pages on the [NARPO](#) website.

Visit [policemutual.co.uk](http://policemutual.co.uk)



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