

Talking or being understood

When you have cancer, you may find the idea of talking about it upsetting or uncomfortable. But, talking can help you get the support you need. This might be from:

- family and friends
- your employer and colleagues
- your healthcare team.

Talking can help if you feel worried or uncertain. It can help you cope better with any difficulties you may have, and give you some control over your situation. It can also help you to make decisions that are right for you.

You may want to appear positive, to make family members or friends feel better. But if you are worried about the future, it is important they know so they can support you.

You may have a close circle of family and friends who can give you a lot of support. But even with support around you, it may be hard to talk about cancer.

It may be easier to talk with someone you do not know. Talking with a counsellor can sometimes help. Counsellors are trained to listen and help people talk through their problems.

You may feel your healthcare team are too busy to talk to you. But be honest with healthcare staff about how you are feeling and about any problems or symptoms you have. This will make it easier for them to give you the help you need.

Tips for talking or being understood

- Try to find a good place to talk. Being in a space you find quiet and comfortable, can help the conversation.
- The first time you talk with someone, think about how much you want to share. You may want to tell them the type of cancer you have and which treatments you may need.
- Remember that at any point you can say you need a break and will talk more at a later time.
- Sometimes it is easier to talk on the phone, or write a letter or email. If you are far away, this may be the only option.
- There will often be friends and family member who want to help. Try starting a conversation and saying what you need, even if you just want them to listen.
- Do not worry about silences. You, your family member or friend may sometimes not know what to say. Holding hands, hugging or just sitting together can often say more than any words.
- The person may be struggling to accept the cancer, or they may not know the best way to help. You may feel resentful about having to deal with their feelings. Try not to push them away or ignore their feelings, as it can make things worse.
- You might find it difficult to ask your medical team the right questions and remember their answers. Take a family member or friend with you to appointments. They can help you remember things that the doctor says, and questions you want to ask.
- Talking with a trained counsellor can help you express and understand your feelings. It can also help you find ways to deal them. You might find it easier to talk to someone you do not know, and who is not involved in your care.

Local resources:

| Resource | Contact details |
|----------|-----------------|
| | |

National resources:

| Resource | Contact details |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Association for Family Therapy & Systemic Practice (AFT) • British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) • Maggie's Centres | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.aft.org.uk Tel 0192 544 4414 • www.bacp.co.uk Tel 01455 883 300 • www.maggiescentres.org Tel 0300 123 1801 Email enquiries@maggiescentres.org |

Further information

[macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/talking-about-cancer/who-should-i-talk-to](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/talking-about-cancer/who-should-i-talk-to)

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on [be.macmillan.org.uk](https://www.be.macmillan.org.uk)

- **Talking about cancer**
- **Ask about your cancer treatment**
- **Talking with someone who has cancer**

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](https://www.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](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/otherformats) or call our support line.