

# HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

## THE EMOTIONAL EFFECTS OF CANCER



# About this booklet

Having cancer affects all areas of your life, including the way that you feel. This booklet discusses the main emotions that many people with cancer have. This may be after diagnosis, during treatment or after treatment has ended.

There are 2.5 million people living with cancer in the UK today. Cancer can affect people of all ages, ethnicities, genders, sexualities and identities. We hope you find this booklet helpful in dealing with some of the feelings you may have. There are also practical ideas of things you could try that may help you cope.

This booklet includes quotes from people who have had cancer. Some are from members of our Online Community (**macmillan.org.uk/community**) or people who have chosen to share their story with us through **macmillan.org.uk/shareyourstory**. Others are from The Source (**macmillan.org.uk/thesource**) and **healthtalk.org**.

## For more information

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm, or visit **macmillan.org.uk**

If you would prefer to speak to us in another language, interpreters are available. Please tell us, in English, the language you want to use.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call us using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app.

We have some information in different languages and formats, including audio, ebooks, Easy Read, Braille, large print and translations. To order these visit **[macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/otherformats)** or call **0808 808 00 00**.

## How to use this booklet

The booklet is split into sections to help you find what you need. You don't have to read it from start to finish. You can use the contents list on page 3 to help you.

It is fine to skip parts of the booklet. You can always come back to them when you feel ready.


### Your data and the cancer registry

When you are diagnosed with cancer in the UK, some information about you is collected in a national database. This is called the cancer registry. It helps the NHS and other organisations plan and improve health and care services. Your hospital will give information about you, your cancer diagnosis and treatment to the registry automatically, unless you ask them not to. As with all medical records, there are strict rules to make sure the information is kept safely and securely. It will only be used for your direct care or for health and social care planning and research.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions about the registry. If you do not want your information included in the registry, you can contact the cancer registry in your country to opt out. You can find more information at **[macmillan.org.uk/cancerregistry](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancerregistry)**. To find details about the cancer registry in your area, see page 104.

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A close-up portrait of a woman with short, dark, wavy hair. She is looking upwards and to her right with a thoughtful or emotional expression. She is wearing a black cardigan over a teal-colored top with a dark floral pattern. The background is softly blurred, showing warm indoor lighting.

**'It made me feel angry. Because not only was cancer threatening my life, it was changing my appearance so my daughters couldn't recognise me as their mum anymore.'**

**Waheed, diagnosed with bone cancer in 2013**

# CANCER AND YOUR FEELINGS

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# Your feelings

Having cancer means having to deal with issues and situations that may frighten and challenge you. There is no right or wrong way to feel. People have different reactions and emotions at different times. You may experience sudden changes in your moods and feelings. These emotions are part of the process many people go through when dealing with an illness.

Common fears and thoughts about cancer may include:

- 'I don't want to lose my independence and freedom.'
- 'I don't want my family or friends to treat me differently.'
- 'I don't know how I'll cope financially.'
- 'I might miss out on a promotion or lose important work contacts.'
- 'I may have to make big changes to my lifestyle.'
- 'I may die'.

These are likely to be very real concerns for you and those close to you. It's fine to worry about them and be upset by them. And it's fine to cry and say how you feel when things feel tough.

At any time after your cancer diagnosis, you may have the following feelings:

## **Shock and denial**

You may find the diagnosis hard to believe and feel numb. You may not be able to take in much information and keep asking the same questions. You might find it hard to talk to family or friends about the cancer. Pages 16 to 23 have information on the benefits of talking and some tips on asking for support. We also discuss what to do if you don't want to talk.

## **Fear and anxiety**

You may feel frightened about the treatment and about whether it will work. You might be anxious about what will happen in the future. We talk more about anxiety on pages 28 to 30.

## **Guilt**

Some people may blame themselves or others for the cancer. They might try to find reasons for why it has happened to them. But most of the time, it is impossible to know exactly what has caused a person's cancer. Pages 44 to 55 discuss how you can get the help and support you need.



## Sadness and depression

You may feel sad that cancer has interrupted plans you had or that your future feels uncertain. Feeling sad is a natural reaction to loss. It may come and go throughout your treatment and after it has finished. For most people, these periods of sadness will pass. But for some people, their sadness may continue or get worse. If you are uncertain whether sadness may be turning into depression, see pages 36 to 37 for more information.

## Anger

You may get angry with the people close to you. You may even resent other people for being well. These are normal reactions. Let people close to you know that you are angry at your illness and not at them. Finding ways to help you relax and reduce stress can help with anger. Pages 74 to 89 discuss things that may help you. It is important to remember that everyone reacts differently. There is no right or wrong way to feel.

**'Cancer can turn your life upside down. You can experience just about every emotion a human being can feel – a real rollercoaster of ups and downs – often in a very short space of time.'**

**Iain**



**'I woke up the next morning bawling my eyes out. I just wanted to get the feelings out of my system. I called my friend every night.'**

**Lara, diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014**

## Advanced cancer

If your doctor has told you your cancer is advanced, you may feel shocked and find it hard to accept. You may feel frightened about the future, or angry with other people or yourself. With time, these feelings can become more manageable. Some people find that starting to make plans and decisions helps.

Although it is rare for advanced cancer to be cured, some people may live with it for a long time – sometimes for years. During this time, many people carry on with their day-to-day lives and do things that are important to them.

Our booklet **Coping with advanced cancer** has more information and suggestions to help you manage difficult feelings. You can order it by calling **0808 808 00 00** or visiting **[be.macmillan.org.uk](http://be.macmillan.org.uk)**

'I think it would be impossible to honestly say you are not affected by someone telling you that you have an incurable condition. I think, as with many things, you just have to accept it. Don't count the days – make the days count.'

**Daren**

# Feeling alone

It is common for people affected by cancer to feel lonely or isolated. These feelings can happen at any stage of the illness.

You might feel that no one understands what you are going through. Or that other people are trying to be so positive that you can't say what you really feel. You may feel lonely even if you are surrounded by people close to you.

You may find that the less you talk about it, the more the cancer becomes all you think about, and the more alone you feel. Finding the courage to talk to just one person can be the first step towards helping you feel better.

## Connect with people

Connecting with other people can help you feel less alone and help you manage your emotions. You can do this in many ways, including:

- talking to family or friends
- joining a self-help or support group (see pages 84 to 85)
- finding online support
- speaking to healthcare professionals
- contacting a support organisation (see pages 97 to 105).

Different things work for different people, so you may need to try a few approaches to see what you find most helpful.

If you feel you have no one to talk to, you can call our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**. You can also use our online community to talk to people in our chat rooms. You can blog about your experiences, make friends and join support groups. Visit **[community.macmillan.org.uk](https://community.macmillan.org.uk)**

We talk about other things you can do to help yourself on pages 74 to 89. See page 69 for information on things you can do if you live alone.

'My Macmillan nurse Maggie was always there if I needed to talk and I felt I couldn't turn to my husband or friends. If there was anything I was worried about, whether it was the chemotherapy or the children, she was my go-to person.'

**Waheed**

# Do feelings affect the cancer?

Your feelings and attitudes can affect the way you cope with cancer and its treatment. But there is no evidence that your thoughts, feelings or attitudes can influence the cancer itself. There is also no evidence that feeling negative or sad can delay your recovery from cancer or its treatment.

Cancer is influenced by many things, including our environment, our diet, and our genetic and physical make-up. So whatever you are feeling is okay. It is important that you are able to talk honestly, and cry if you need to. This can help release tension and stress. It can even bring you closer to the person you are talking to.





# TALKING ABOUT CANCER

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## Talking helps

After being diagnosed with cancer, you may find the idea of talking about it upsetting or uncomfortable. It may take you some time to cope with your diagnosis.

Putting feelings into words may seem overwhelming. But talking about how you feel and what you need can help you make the right decisions and feel supported.

Many people don't like talking about their own needs. They don't realise it is okay and important to confide in others. Some people fear they will be seen as demanding.

However, there will often be friends and relatives who really want to help. Try starting a conversation and saying what you need, even if you just want them to listen. You may be surprised at how willing they are to support you. By asking for someone's support, it shows that you value them.

## Support networks

People have different support networks. Whether yours is your family, your partner, a friend or a social group, try to talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling. If you feel you have no one to talk to, you can call our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**, or visit our Online Community (**[community.macmillan.org.uk](https://community.macmillan.org.uk)**) where you can speak to other people facing cancer. The organisations on pages 97 to 103 can also offer support.



# The benefits of talking

Talking may help you to:

- Understand how you are feeling and why. When we keep everything inside, our thoughts often feel confusing. Putting thoughts into words can make them clearer.
- Express how you are feeling. Having a lot of concerns can make us feel overwhelmed. Talking can ease the pressure and make us feel better.
- Feel reassured that your feelings are normal. We may feel guilty, weak or ashamed for some of our thoughts or actions following a cancer diagnosis. Having someone listen to us without judgement can reassure us that our thoughts are normal. Often this is enough to relieve many negative feelings we have towards ourselves.
- Put things into perspective. The more we think about something, the more we worry about it. It can be a big relief once your emotions are out in the open.
- Find the answer to a problem. Talking to another person can bring up solutions we have not thought of. Sometimes it just gives us the time or opportunity to think of one ourselves.
- Make important decisions. When we have decisions to make that affect others, we often assume we know what other people are thinking or feeling. But sometimes they may surprise us with their views and help make tough decisions easier.

- Feel more in control of your feelings and situations. Talking may help you feel more confident about dealing with difficult issues and conversations in the future.
- Feel more supported and less anxious. Knowing someone else understands, cares and is there for us helps reassure us that we are not going through difficult times alone.
- Build bonds with your family or friends. People close to us want to feel that they are important to us. Talking about personal issues with them and including them in important decisions makes them feel valued.

'At first I felt guilty talking about it, because I didn't want to be a burden. But I'm so glad I did, because talking is such a source of support for me. I think it helps my friends and family feel like they're doing something to help me too.'

**Tess**

# Practical tips when asking for support

Opening up communication with another person is the first step to getting the support you need. You may find you use these tips at different times or with different people.

- Think about which issues are most important to you. You may find it difficult to focus at first because there is a lot on your mind. But often people find there are only two or three things they really want to discuss. Writing the issues down may help you prioritise them.
- Tell the person that you want to talk about the cancer. This lets your listener know that what follows is important to you.
- You may find it easier to narrow down what is worrying you by taking the conversation in stages. You could start by saying something general, such as, 'I'm worried about how things are at the moment.' This can make it easier to focus on particular problems.
- Asking the other person if they understand may help you feel listened to. You could use phrases such as, 'Do you see what I mean?' or, 'Does that make sense to you?'
- If you have agreed for some things to be done, try to sum up what has been said at the end of the conversation.
- It's okay to go back to small talk. You don't have to discuss serious issues all the time. Just chatting about everyday things can help you feel that normal life still goes on.

You can use the tool on the next page to note down the areas in your life where you want support. Sharing this with people close to you may help them support you in the way you need.

This tool is taken from **thinkaboutyourlife.org**, which was developed by cancer survivors. We have more of these tools throughout this booklet (pages 31, 71 and 87), which we hope you find useful. We have filled in examples on each so you can see how they are used. The website has more examples, stories and support to help you use them.

‘When my best friend was going through her treatment, I tried to keep things as real as possible for her and between us. The last thing somebody needs is seriousness all the time, when actually, making them laugh and keeping things as normal as possible can work a treat.’

**Michelle**

[illegible]


# If you don't want to talk

There may be times when you don't feel like talking and want to be on your own. Don't feel that you have to see people if you don't want to or if you need time to yourself.

Allow other people to go to the door or answer the phone for you. If you are in hospital, you may want to limit the number of visitors you have. You can ask a relative or the nurses to help you with this.

Our booklet **Talking about cancer** has more information about speaking to people about cancer, and understanding their responses. We also have a booklet called **Talking with someone who has cancer** that has advice for family and friends. You can order our information at [be.macmillan.org.uk](http://be.macmillan.org.uk) or by calling **0808 808 00 00**.



A woman with short dark hair is seated on a red leather armchair. She is wearing a teal patterned top and a black cardigan. She holds a small, colorful, patterned cup with both hands. She is looking off to the side with a thoughtful or somber expression. The background is a bright, out-of-focus interior space with large windows.

**'I was absolutely terrified.  
I didn't know much about  
cancer. I thought I was going  
to die.'**

**Waheed**

# FEAR AND ANXIETY

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## Dealing with change

Uncertainty can be one of the hardest feelings to deal with, and it might make you feel irritable, angry and frightened.

Feeling that we have some control over our lives gives us a sense of security and allows us to enjoy the things we do. It is natural to want to know what is likely to happen next, so that we can make plans for the future. But being diagnosed with cancer can take away that sense of security, and leave you feeling uncertain about what is ahead.

You may find that doctors can't answer your questions fully, or that their answers sound vague. For example, it is often impossible for them to say for certain how effective a treatment will be. Doctors know roughly how many people will benefit from a treatment, but can't predict the future for a particular person with certainty.

Many people find this uncertainty hard to cope with. On pages 74 to 89, we discuss things you can do to help you manage your feelings.

**'One day you feel great and full of energy, the next you're bedridden and so fatigued you can barely walk a few steps.'**

**Lara**



# Anxiety

Feeling frightened and anxious is a natural reaction to an uncertain situation. But if it affects your ability to cope with day-to-day life, help may be needed. Symptoms of anxiety may include:

- not being able to concentrate
- irritability
- being easily distracted
- restlessness
- a constant feeling of dread.

Anxiety may also have the following physical symptoms:

- tense muscles
- breathlessness
- dizziness
- sweating
- a dry mouth
- being unable to sleep
- tiredness
- digestive problems.

Anxiety is how your body reacts when you feel you are in danger. This is called the 'fight or flight' response. Your body is preparing you to either fight something seen as a threat or to flee from the danger.

Reassurance from other people that ‘everything will be alright’ can sometimes make the anxiety worse. You may feel that they do not take your concerns seriously, or that they are struggling to accept your illness.

See pages 58 to 63 for more details on how your feelings can affect you physically.

## Tips for managing anxiety

To help you cope with feelings of anxiety, you may find the following tips helpful:

- Talk to someone who can listen objectively. This may be your doctor, nurse, or a partner, a family member, a friend or a professional counsellor. You may also want to join a support group. See pages 51 to 53 for more information on talking therapies.
- Breathe deeply. Focusing on breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth can help you to feel calmer.
- Listen to music. Put on music you enjoy and close your eyes to feel calmer.
- Do physical exercise. Even a short walk can help relieve anxiety.
- Keep a diary. Working out what triggers your anxiety can help you manage those situations.
- Eat a healthy diet. Avoid stimulants such as coffee, tobacco and alcohol.
- Try a complementary therapy. Activities or treatments such as yoga, meditation, massage or reflexology may help you relax and manage your anxiety. See pages 79 to 83 for more information.

If you feel that your anxiety is getting worse, speak to your GP, your specialist nurse or a counsellor. They can help you look at how your anxiety is affecting you and find ways of coping with it. You may also find it helpful to contact Anxiety UK (see page 97).

Many people who have anxiety may also have depression. We discuss depression on pages 36 to 39.

## Hopes and fears

You might like to use the tool on the opposite page to write down your hopes and fears. It might help you talk to people about what is frightening you. Even if you don't want to share it, you may still find it useful. There is also space for you to think about the next steps you could take to manage your concerns.



## Hopes

To return to work once my treatment has ended



## Fears

That my savings will run out

### Next steps

Ring the Macmillan Support Line and check if I can claim any benefits



# Panic attacks

If you are very anxious then you may have a panic attack. A panic attack is an intense version of your body's normal response to fear or stress. It can include:

- a pounding heartbeat
- sweating
- feeling sick (nausea)
- feeling faint
- feeling unable to breathe
- chest pains
- shaky arms or legs.

## How to handle a panic attack

When you are having a panic attack, try to:

- stay where you are or pull over if you are driving
- tell yourself it's a panic attack and it will pass
- breathe slowly and deeply
- think about positive things, like a favourite place.

## Can I control panic attacks?

Panic attacks can feel overwhelming, but there are ways to help control them. Talking therapies (see pages 51 to 53) can help to manage panic attacks. If you are already seeing a counsellor, tell them you have had a panic attack so they can work out how to help you. There are also many self-help resources available. Your doctor can help you access these. See pages 44 to 50 for information on where you can get help.

Ensure your family and friends also know you have had a panic attack in case it happens again. We have practical tips on managing anxiety on pages 29 to 30.

Other ways to manage panic attacks include breathing exercises and visualisation. You can read more about relaxation and visualisation in our booklet **Cancer and complementary therapies**.

‘I am having counselling and have found it helpful in terms of strategies to use when I feel panicky or anxious. You could ask your specialist nurse about this.’

**Alwyn**



# MANAGING FEELINGS OF DEPRESSION

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## Do I have depression?

When you have cancer, you may feel very sad at times. This may be at the time of diagnosis, or during or after treatment. This is completely normal and for most people these periods of sadness will pass. Pages 74 to 89 suggest positive things you can do that may help you feel better.

For some people, a low mood may continue or get worse. This may mean they have depression and need some extra help or treatment to be able to cope. Depression is common and can be triggered by different events or situations. People who have cancer or have had it in the past can be more likely to be diagnosed with depression. But it can also be related to things that have nothing to do with cancer.

It can be difficult to know whether you are sad and worried about the cancer and its treatment, or whether you have depression. It may be other people who notice symptoms and suggest that you might need help.

Symptoms of depression can include:

- having a very low mood most of the time
- feeling tired or lacking in energy
- not enjoying activities you used to
- crying a lot, or feeling unable to cry
- having difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- being unusually irritable or impatient
- not wanting to see other people
- waking up early, having difficulty sleeping, or sleeping more than usual
- having little motivation to look after yourself
- feeling less affectionate or having a loss of sexual desire
- feeling guilty or worthless
- feeling that the world would be better without you
- having thoughts of harming yourself.

These are just some of the symptoms of depression. They will be different for each person. Some of these symptoms can also be caused by the cancer or its treatment. If you think you may have depression, talk to your doctor or nurse.

# Dealing with depression

It can feel as though you will never recover from depression. But there are lots of things that can help you cope and there is a good chance your mood will improve. It is important to remember that depression is common. It is not a sign of personal failure or inability to cope, and there are people who can help you. The first step to feeling better is finding help.

Self-help techniques, talking therapies or medication can all help speed up your recovery. We discuss these over the next few pages and on pages 44 to 55.

## Self-care

Whether your feelings of depression are mild or severe, there are things you can do that may help, including:

- getting enough sleep
- eating well
- keeping active
- doing things you enjoy
- connecting with other people.

It can be hard to find the energy and motivation to look after yourself when you have depression. Even small tasks may feel very difficult. They may feel impossible when you are also going through cancer treatment. Try to do one small thing at a time and celebrate your successes.

## Getting help with depression

If you think you might have depression, speak to your doctor. They will want to speak to you about your feelings and work with you to find a solution.

They may:

- give you a diagnosis, for example of depression or anxiety
- refer you to another service, such as a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist (see page 46)
- give you details of a talking therapy service you can contact yourself (see pages 48 to 49)
- prescribe you medication (see pages 54 to 55).

This may not happen at the first appointment. Your doctor may give you a questionnaire to fill in first. They will want to know how the depression developed, how it is affecting you, and any treatments you have tried so far. They are asking these questions so they can work out the best way to help you. Your doctor may also want to monitor you for a period of time before offering any diagnosis or treatment.

They will then be able to suggest ways of managing the depression, including talking therapies, medicines or a combination of both.

See pages 44 to 50 for information on getting help from healthcare professionals and other organisations.



## Suicidal feelings

Suicidal feelings can be a reaction to overwhelming emotions that you don't feel able to cope with. It can also be common for people who are very depressed to feel they are a burden to others and that their loved ones would be better off without them.

Often people who feel this way believe that no one will be able to help them. This is not true.

**It is very important to talk to someone. This could be your doctor, someone in your healthcare team, your therapist or a helpline. They can arrange specialist help for you.**

Talk to someone if you have:

- thoughts about hurting yourself
- thoughts about killing yourself
- thoughts about hurting someone else
- other symptoms you are worried about.

In some situations, your doctor may think it would be helpful for you to spend a few days in hospital. Specially trained staff can support you and help you feel better as quickly as possible. In some areas, specialist psychiatric support teams can visit you at home.

**Samaritans has a 24-hour confidential helpline that provides support to anyone in emotional crisis. The phone number is 116 123. See page 101 for full contact details. You can also get help by going to your local Accident and Emergency (A&E) department.**



**'I am very grateful for the amazing care I have had from the advisers and counsellors at Macmillan.'**

**Ezio, diagnosed with multiple myeloma in 2012**



# GETTING HELP

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## How to get help

If you find your feelings and emotions are overwhelming, or if you are becoming increasingly anxious (see pages 28 to 30) or depressed (see pages 36 to 37), it may be time to get help from a healthcare professional.

You can get help from:

- your healthcare team at the hospital (see opposite page)
- your GP (see opposite page)
- self-referral (see pages 48 to 49)
- online mental health services (see page 49)
- local charities and organisations (see page 50)
- private clinics (see page 50)

If you have access to private health insurance, some schemes also cover mental health.

**'After speaking to the psychologist at Macmillan, I realised that I wasn't on my own with this. It was all explained to me very clearly. That it would go away. I'm feeling lots better due to the advice that I've had.'**

**Alfie**

## Help from your healthcare team

Many people get a lot of support from the hospital staff who look after them during their treatment.

If you are having cancer treatment, you may be given a **clinical nurse specialist** or **key worker**. These specialist nurses are often your main contact at the hospital. They can give information and support to you and your family.

They can help with concerns you feel you can't talk to your consultant about, like worries about travelling, finances or work. They are also likely to have details of local support groups and other organisations that may be able to help.

## Help from your GP

Try to plan what you want to say. It can help to write things down before the appointment. When you are with your GP, tell them how you really feel. Focus on what concerns you most. This will help them give you the most helpful advice or treatment. Appointments are usually short, but a little planning ahead will help you to get what you need from your GP.

Taking a relative or friend along to the appointment can help you remember everything you want to discuss. After the appointment they can also remind you about what the doctor said. Some GPs are happy for you to record the discussion so you can listen to it later. Check this is okay with your GP before the discussion starts.

Your doctor may refer you to one of the following professionals:

**Counsellors** are trained to listen and help people talk through their problems. They will not give advice or provide answers, but they will help you find your own solutions. This can be very helpful, particularly if you don't feel able to discuss your feelings and emotions with people close to you.

**Clinical psychologists** are trained to understand what people think and feel, and how they behave – particularly in stressful situations, such as coping with cancer. They can also help people with their relationships. If you are depressed or anxious, a clinical psychologist can help you look at thoughts or patterns of behaviour that are causing you problems.

**Psychiatrists** are doctors who diagnose and treat mental health problems, including depression and anxiety. Some psychiatrists are specially trained in looking after the mental health of people with cancer.

**Community psychiatric nurses** help people live with all types of mental health problems.

There are many healthcare professionals who can help you cope with your feelings and emotions. Each one has a different role, but usually you will only need the help of one or two of them.





It may feel uncomfortable, but being open and honest with healthcare professionals is important to get the information and support that you need. It is illegal for healthcare staff to discriminate against you because of your age, ethnicity, gender or sexuality.

## Self-referral

In England, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) is a programme that offers talking therapies (see pages 51 to 53) for common mental health problems. You can contact the service yourself. Go to **[nhs.uk/service-search](https://www.nhs.uk/service-search)** and search for psychological therapies (IAPT) to find your local service.

There is some discussion about whether IAPT will be expanded to cover more of the UK. At present, it is still only available in England.

If you live in Scotland, call **0800 328 9655** (Monday to Friday, 1pm to 9pm) to access the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) telephone service. You will be asked to provide some details. An assessment appointment will then be arranged to discuss the service and how they can provide you with help. Two types of telephone support are available. Visit **[www.nhs24.com/usefulresources/livinglife](https://www.nhs24.com/usefulresources/livinglife)** to find out more.

In Wales, there is no similar self-referral scheme. You will need to visit your doctor for referral to counselling services through the NHS.

People living in Northern Ireland can call Lifeline on **0808 808 8000**. You will receive immediate help on the phone from a trained counsellor. They will help you to identify what type of support you need and can arrange a face-to-face counselling appointment in your local area within seven days. Visit **[lifelinehelpline.info](https://lifelinehelpline.info)** for more information.

## Waiting times

Unfortunately not all areas offer the same services, and waiting times can be long. During this time, it is important for you to get the support you need. Many of the organisations on pages 97 to 101 offer support via phone, email or face-to-face through local support groups. It can help to keep a diary of your feelings and moods, and to speak to your GP or cancer specialists if things change.

## Online mental health services

There are a range of online services available to support people with mental health issues. These can be delivered via computers, tablets or phones. If you are supported by a remote therapist, it can be just as effective as face-to-face therapy.

You may be able to use online services for free on the NHS. You can ask your GP or therapist, or contact the services yourself. If they are not available on the NHS in your area, you may be able to pay for the services.

Visit **[nhs.uk/conditions/online-mental-health-services](https://nhs.uk/conditions/online-mental-health-services)** to find out more.

## Local charities and organisations

There are local counselling centres run by charities or counsellor training schools. Many of these organisations offer support via phone, email or face-to-face through local support groups. See pages 97 to 101 for a list organisations. You may also find an organisation that provides counselling near to you by searching online for 'low-cost counselling' with the name of your area.

## Private clinics

Private therapists can often see you straight away. They can be expensive, though many offer lower rates if you are on a low income. You may see this called a 'sliding scale'. Private therapy is useful if you want a certain talking therapy, access to treatment more quickly, or you want to continue therapy for a longer time than you can on the NHS.

You can find a private therapist through the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) – see page 98.

'Talking to a trained counsellor every week helped me put into words all the emotions I was going through. It enabled me to deal with my fears and my frustrations, and it provided me with a sense of empowerment.'

**Aurélie**

# Talking therapies

Talking therapies can help many people, including those who have anxiety or depression. They involve talking to a therapist about your thoughts and feelings. It is a safe space to explore your feelings and worries, and to find ways of coping.

There are many different types available. We have listed a few specific types of talking therapy here, but there are others to choose from.

## Counselling

Many people get support by talking to close family members or friends. However you might find it difficult to talk about your concerns with people close to you. It can help to talk to someone outside your family and circle of friends, who has been trained to listen and can help you explore your feelings. Having the time to talk things through often helps you see a way forward.

Talking one-to-one with a trained counsellor can help you sort out your feelings and find ways of coping with them. Some GPs have counsellors in their practice, or they can refer you to one. If you are employed, counselling may be available through self-referral or an occupational health scheme. You may need to pay for counselling, particularly if you would like to see a counsellor long-term.



## Group therapy

In group therapy, a trained therapist (counsellor or other professional) encourages a group of individuals to share their feelings and experiences with each other.

## Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)

The way we think can have a powerful effect on how we feel. People who are anxious or depressed often have negative patterns of thinking and behaviour, which keep them feeling low. CBT is designed to break this cycle.

The therapist will help you recognise the negative thoughts that are making you feel low and help you find effective ways to challenge them. They will also help you find out which things give you a sense of satisfaction and pleasure.

You can ask your doctor or nurse to tell you about any local counselling and support services that are available to you. You can search for counsellors on the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy's (BACP) website – visit **[itsgoodtotalk.org.uk](https://itsgoodtotalk.org.uk)** Organisations that provide counselling and emotional support are also listed on pages 97 to 101.

## Access on the NHS

Talking therapies are available for free through the NHS, but it often depends on what is available in your area. Your GP may refer you to a specialist, tell you about a self-referral service, or direct you to online services (see pages 48 to 49).

# Anti-depressant medicines

Some people will be prescribed an anti-depressant to help lift their mood. There are different types of anti-depressant. Your doctors may need to try more than one to find the type that suits you best. They take effect slowly, which means you may not notice much improvement in your symptoms until at least two to four weeks after you start treatment. Your doctor will monitor how well they are working for you.

Most people need to take anti-depressants for at least six months to help them through their depression. Anti-depressants are not addictive, but you should not stop taking them suddenly as it can cause strong withdrawal symptoms. When stopping anti-depressants, it is important you follow your doctor's advice.

## Side effects

Like all other medicines, anti-depressants can have side effects. These are different for each medicine and individual. Ask your doctor to explain what effects are possible. It is also important to read the leaflet that comes with the medicine. This will tell you what to expect. Tell your doctor about any side effects you have.

It is important to follow your doctor's instructions when taking anti-depressants. Ensure you tell your doctor about any other health conditions you have or other medicines you are taking. Some anti-depressants can react with other medicines. Occasionally, anti-depressants can cause suicidal feelings, even if you have not had them before. If you are worried about side effects, talk to your doctor or dial 999 in an emergency.

You can read more about anti-depressants on Mind's website. Go to **[mind.org.uk/information-support](https://mind.org.uk/information-support)** and search for anti-depressants.

## St John's wort

St John's wort is a herbal treatment but it is not recommended. It can react with other medicines, including cancer treatments, making them less effective. If you are thinking of taking St John's wort, it is important to speak to your doctor first.





# CAN MY FEELINGS CAUSE PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS?

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Possible physical symptoms of stress

58

# Possible physical symptoms of stress

The stress of cancer and its treatment can affect your energy levels, sexual desire, ability to sleep or appetite. How long these effects last will vary from person to person.

## Extreme tiredness (fatigue)

Fatigue is an overwhelming feeling of tiredness or exhaustion. It is very common in people who are anxious or depressed. But it is also a very common side effect of many cancer treatments. This can make it difficult to know what is causing your tiredness, and it is often a bit of both. If you think it is due to anxiety or depression, some of the self-help ideas listed on page 89 may help.

If your tiredness is due to your cancer or its treatment, you may find our booklet **Coping with fatigue** helpful. You can order it at [be.macmillan.org.uk](http://be.macmillan.org.uk) or by calling **0808 808 00 00**.

## Loss of appetite

Anxiety or depression can cause you to lose your appetite. In turn, this may make you lose weight. If your loss of appetite is due to anxiety or depression, some of the ideas on page 89 may help.

We have a series of booklets about diet and cancer. These give helpful advice on:

- following a healthy diet
- how to cope with eating problems caused by cancer or its treatment
- how to increase your energy and protein intake when you don't feel hungry.

## Loss of interest in sex

You may lose interest in sex if you are anxious or depressed. Whether you are heterosexual, gay or bisexual, cancer can affect your relationship and sex life in different ways. People are often reluctant to talk about this very intimate area of their lives. If you have a partner, it can help to talk to them about how you feel. It may help you both feel more secure if you explain that your lack of interest doesn't mean a lack of affection.

You may find it helps to focus on being more sensual than sexual. Using touch can be an important way of telling someone how you feel.

'I really didn't feel like sex at all. And I think my husband felt that I was rejecting him. The furthest thing from your mind is having sex. I want a cuddle or just to be held or to talk. But we're talking about it now and he knows that hopefully it won't last forever.'

**Olga**

You may find it helps to discuss your feelings with a trained counsellor. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the charity Relate provides relationship counselling and offers support by phone and online. In Scotland, you can contact Relationships Scotland. The LGBT Foundation offers couples counselling for lesbian, gay and bisexual and trans people. There are details of these organisations on pages 99 to 100.

You can also search for a trained therapist who specialises in sexual problems at **itsgoodtotalk.org.uk**, which covers England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

If you feel comfortable, you can also discuss problems with your GP, cancer specialist or clinical nurse specialist. They can look at whether it is a side effect of medication and if changes can be made. They may also be able to refer you to a specialist.

If you would prefer to speak to someone over the phone, you can call our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**.

You may find our booklets **Cancer and your sex life – information for men** or **Cancer and your sex life – information for women** helpful in coping with the effects of cancer and its treatment.

## Pain

Anxiety and depression can change how you feel and react to pain. This means that pain can be harder to bear. Dealing with your emotions or treating depression can help reduce pain, as well as improve your mood. Your doctor or nurse can help you manage both physical and emotional pain.

If your pain is due to your cancer or its treatment, our booklet **Managing cancer pain** may be helpful.



## Sleep problems

Many people have trouble sleeping at some point in their life. If you have cancer, you may find it difficult to sleep because of general anxiety, worry about treatment or fears about the future. However, it is very important to try to keep to a normal sleep routine.

Some of the following suggestions may help you sleep better. You may also find other things that work for you.

- Go to bed and get up at about the same time every day. Having a long lie-in after a sleepless night can lead to a disrupted sleep pattern.
- Try gentle exercise like walking to help you feel naturally tired and ready for sleep.
- Keep your mind occupied with activities such as reading, games or puzzles.
- Get into a relaxing routine before bed. Try reading or listening to soothing music. You could have a warm bath or shower with relaxing oils or burn essential oils such as lavender.
- Try listening to an audiobook or a relaxation exercise.
- Make your bedroom a relaxing place to be in. Create an area that is dark, quiet and comfortable.
- Avoid large meals and stimulants like caffeine or cigarettes in the late evening. Try having a warm, milky drink before bed.
- Although a small alcoholic drink can help, too much alcohol can lead to disrupted sleep.

- Some medicines, for example steroids, can cause sleeplessness. Ask your doctor or nurse if you can take them earlier in the day. They may suggest you take them before 2pm.
- If you find it difficult to fall asleep or if you wake during the night and can't get back to sleep, get up and go to another room. Do something else, like reading or listening to music, until you feel tired again.
- If you find that worries or concerns are keeping you awake, write them down. You can then speak to someone about them later.
- Be aware of how naps affect you. Some people find that daytime naps help them sleep better at night, while others sleep less well after them.

Relaxation CDs, tapes or podcasts can also help you get to sleep. You can access meditation and relaxation audio files and videos on our Learn Zone website. Go to **[learnzone.org.uk](https://learnzone.org.uk)** and search for 'relaxation audio tracks'.

We have more information about difficulty sleeping (insomnia). For more information, visit **[macmillan.org.uk/difficultysleeping](https://macmillan.org.uk/difficultysleeping)** or call **0808 808 00 00**.



**'Life has been very difficult these past few years, but we have developed a strong, deeply important relationship through everything that happened.'**

**Ezio**



# COPING WITH EVERYDAY LIFE

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## Family life

Looking after a family can be hard work, even when you are well. Juggling family life with work, as well as coping with cancer and the emotions it can cause, may seem impossible. It can also feel difficult to support other people when you feel in need of support yourself.

Be realistic about what you can manage. Try to get help from a partner, your family or your friends before things become too much for you to cope with. Think about which duties you can give up for a short time. This may help you concentrate on coping with the cancer.

If you are a parent, you may not be able to do all the things you usually do for your children. This doesn't mean you have failed in any way. It just means you need to plan your time and save your energy for the most important tasks.

Your family members may also be finding it difficult to cope with changes to family life. They will also have fears about the future. Try to talk openly about your concerns and how you can support each other.

It may also be helpful to talk to someone outside the family, such as a good friend or trained counsellor. For more information about talking therapies or getting professional help, see pages 97 to 101.

## If you have a partner

Being diagnosed with a serious illness can be difficult for you as an individual. If you have a partner, it can also affect them. Coping with cancer can put a strain on relationships. But some couples come to a new understanding and love for each other by overcoming a shared challenge like cancer.

Make time to talk and share your feelings with each other. This can help you understand each other better and feel closer.

If you are finding communication with your partner difficult, seeing a couples counsellor may make it easier to talk. See pages 97 to 101 for contact details of some useful organisations, including organisations that support lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people.

If you have become less interested in sex because of cancer or its treatment, see pages 59 to 60 for more information about the help available.

Our leaflet **Cancer, you and your partner** has more information about the impact cancer can have on relationships, and what may help.

## Talking to children about cancer

Deciding what to tell your children or grandchildren about your cancer is difficult. An open, honest approach is usually best. Even very young children can sense when something is wrong, and their fears can sometimes be worse than the reality.

Talking to your children may also relieve some of your own anxiety. You may have felt the need to hide where you have been going or physical symptoms, such as hair loss or tiredness. This can create extra stress.

How much you tell your children will depend on their age and how mature they are. It may be best to start by giving only small amounts of information, and gradually telling them more to build up a picture of your illness.

You may find our booklet **Talking to children and teenagers when an adult has cancer** helpful. We also have a video on our website about talking to children – visit [macmillan.org.uk/talkingtochildren](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/talkingtochildren)

## Support from hospices

Hospices can help anyone with cancer and other chronic illnesses, not just people who are seriously ill. They can offer symptom control, physiotherapy, psychological support and a range of complementary therapies, such as massage and reflexology. The care is free and it may help you relax and reduce stress.

Visiting a hospice for day therapy can also give you the chance to meet people going through similar things. It can also give your family or carers some time for themselves. Your GP or hospital doctor can organise a referral for hospice support.

# If you live alone

Living alone can add extra stresses. Even though you may value your independence, being ill may make you feel lonely and frightened.

It is all right to ask for help. People who care about you will want to help in any way they can. Some people may find it difficult to talk, but may be happy to help in practical ways. They might be able to help with shopping or with your garden. You could make a list of practical things that would make your life easier. If people offer to help but are not sure what to do, they can choose something from your list.

Other people may be able to talk with you and listen to you. This could help you to share your worries and fears.

Marie Curie (see page 103) has a free helper service available in parts of the UK. Someone can visit you to have a chat over a cup of tea, help you get to an appointment, run an errand, or just be there to listen when you need a friendly ear.

Your GP, social worker, or community nurse will also be able to tell you what help and support is available from local health, social care and voluntary organisations (see page 50).

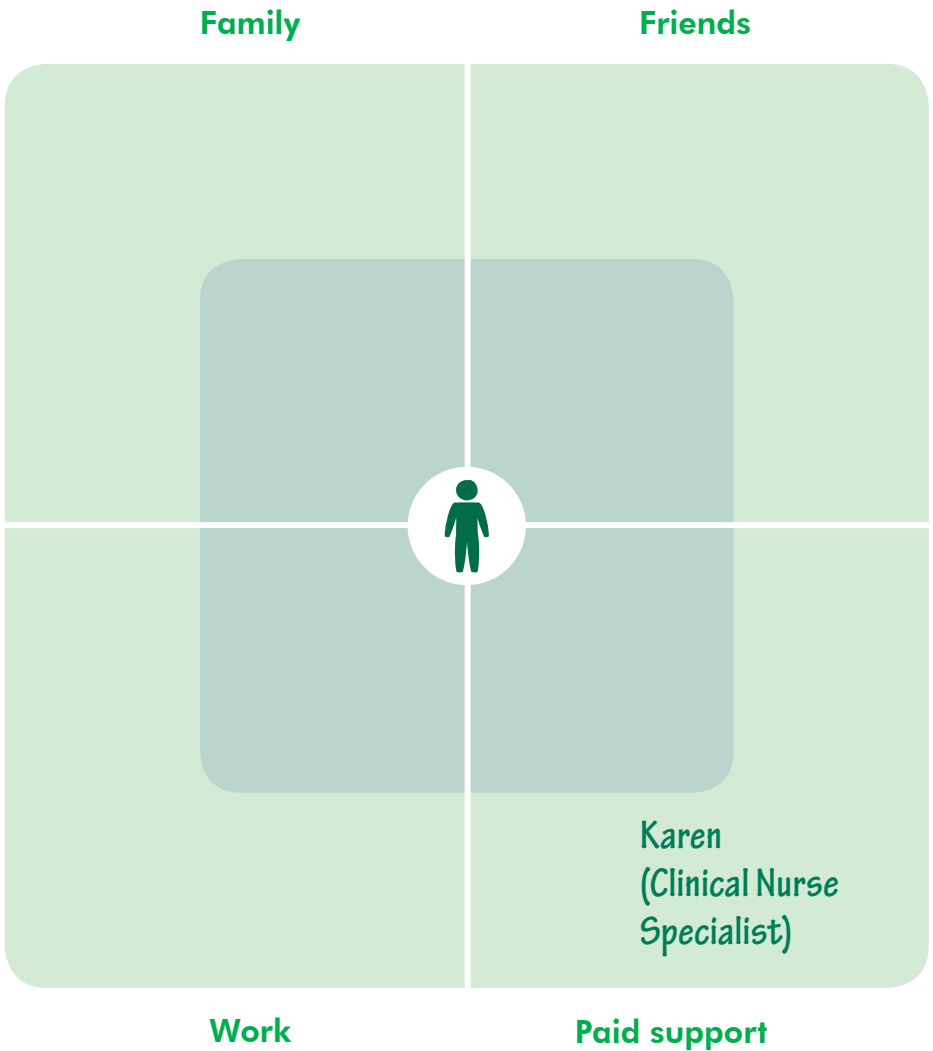
# Managing work

Work is an important part of life for some people. It can help to have a discussion with your employer about the best way to manage your work. If you are finding things difficult to cope with, you may need to take time off until you feel better. It can feel very different going back to work. Your priorities can change, and you may want to consider working part-time or returning to work gradually.

You may find it helpful to read our booklet **Work and cancer**. If you are self-employed, you might like to read our booklet **Self-employment and cancer**.

## Relationship map

The relationship map opposite can help you see more clearly who is important in your life and who can help in different ways. You can record on the map the names of people closest to you in the inner circle. The outer circle is for those who care about you and are present in your life, but might not be relied upon for deep emotional support.







**'Just because you're going through gruelling treatment doesn't mean you'll be stuck in bed for 9 months. You can still have fun, wear a sequin dress and throw on a purple wig!'**

**Lara**

# POSITIVE STEPS TO HELP YOURSELF

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## Taking control

Learning about the cancer and its treatment can give you back some feeling of control. This can help you feel more confident about the future. But it is up to you to decide how much information you would like at any time.

The information can help you when speaking with your doctor, family, friends or work colleagues. It will also help you feel more involved in your care, and more in control.

It will also help if you tell people what you really think and feel. This will help them understand the issues that are important to you. You may like to use the table on page 31 to write down your hopes and fears.



## Reliable sources of information

Your doctors and nurses are in the best position to answer your questions because they know about your situation. If they don't have the information you are looking for though, there are lots of other reliable sources you can use.

A lot of misleading information is available, and many people still believe myths about cancer. It is important to get information that is up to date and comes from a reliable source.

You can get information from Macmillan. We have information in a range of formats about cancer, cancer treatments and all aspects of living with cancer. You can order our information by visiting **be.macmillan.org.uk** or by calling our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**. You can also view our information online at **macmillan.org.uk**

Reliable information is also available from the organisations listed on pages 97 to 105.

'It's all rather confusing for us patients, but my philosophy is to be pragmatic and proactive in getting as much information as possible.'

Iain

# Healthy eating

Having a balanced diet is one of the best choices you can make for your overall health. Many people find making this positive change helps give them back a sense of control. It can also help you feel that you are doing the best for your health. Thinking about what and how much you drink is part of this too.

Eating well and keeping to a healthy weight will help you maintain or regain your strength, have more energy and increase your sense of well-being. There is no evidence that eating a particular diet can cure a cancer. But a healthy, balanced diet can help reduce the risk of new cancers and other diseases, such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Our booklet **Healthy eating and cancer** has more information on getting a balanced diet.

'I try and have my five portions of fruit and veg a day and wholemeal bread and things like that. But I eat meat. I use butter. I drink alcohol. And I aim to do those things in moderation rather than give them up.'

**Ali**

# Physical activity

When you are living with or after cancer, becoming more active can be a positive change to make in your life. Evidence shows that physical activity can benefit people affected by cancer in several ways. Research suggests that being physically active and eating a healthy diet can help reduce the risk of recurrence for some cancer types and increase survival. It also helps reduce the risk of developing other health problems, such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Being active before, during and after treatment can:

- reduce tiredness and some treatment side effects
- reduce anxiety and depression
- improve your mood and quality of life
- strengthen your muscles, joints and bones
- look after your heart and reduce the risk of other health problems.

At first, you might be nervous about starting and building up your activity, especially if you haven't been active for a while. You may worry that you are too tired, or you may not know where to begin. But even a little physical activity is better than none. Physical activity encourages the brain to produce chemicals (endorphins) that improve mood and reduce stress. It will also help you feel more in control, because you are doing something positive for yourself.

Being active with other people can really help. You could exercise with family or friends. Or you could join a cancer rehabilitation programme and exercise with other people who understand what you are going through. It can also help to be active outdoors somewhere green, such as a park. You could try gardening or joining a walking group.

See page 105 for walking organisations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. You might like to read our booklet **Physical activity and cancer**.

'I find that some exercise or activity is extremely helpful for both body and mind. It can be fun too! It doesn't need to be a marathon or a climb up Mount Kilimanjaro. Speed, height and distance are not important – the direction is.'

**Ronny**

# Mindfulness meditation

Mindfulness is a form of meditation. It is about paying attention to what is happening in the present moment. You are encouraged to become aware of your thoughts and feelings, without making judgements about them. It can help you change the way you think about different experiences. This can help to reduce stress and anxiety.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) are evidence based mindfulness programmes. MBCT was developed to support people in chronic pain and has been used in cancer support. MBCT is usually taught as an eight-week course, either in groups or individually. MBCT can be learned online at **[bemindfulonline.com](https://bemindfulonline.com)** The introductory session can be completed for free before you decide whether to purchase the course.



Mindfulness classes are also available from:

- The NHS – ask your doctor about what is available in your area or at your hospital.
- Mind – courses are available throughout England and Wales. Visit **[mind.org.uk/information-support/local-minds](https://mind.org.uk/information-support/local-minds)** to find your nearest centre.
- Buddhist Centres – visit **[thebuddhistcentre.com](https://thebuddhistcentre.com)** to search for classes near you in England, Scotland and Wales.
- Aware – the national depression charity for Northern Ireland runs courses in Mindfulness. Visit **[aware-ni.org](https://aware-ni.org)** and search for ‘Mindfulness’.
- Online – Kara is a free web resource. It introduces mindfulness meditation to people with cancer. Visit **[thisiskara.com](https://thisiskara.com)**
- A private practitioner – search for a certified mindfulness teacher at **[bemindful.co.uk](https://bemindful.co.uk)**

You can learn more by visiting **[mentalhealth.org.uk/publications](https://mentalhealth.org.uk/publications)** and searching for ‘How to look after your mental health using mindfulness’.



# Complementary therapies

Complementary therapies are used alongside conventional medical treatments. People use them to boost their physical or emotional health. They can also be used to relieve symptoms or side effects. Some therapies have been scientifically tested to check how effective and safe they are. Complementary therapies do not claim to cure cancer.

There are many types of complementary therapy, including:

- acupuncture
- aromatherapy
- visualisation
- homeopathy
- reflexology.

Always check with your doctor if you are thinking of using a complementary therapy.

Some hospitals and hospices provide complementary therapies alongside conventional cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy. See page 68 for more information on hospices. Some support groups also offer complementary therapies. Complementary therapies may help you:

- feel better and improve your quality of life
- feel less stressed, tense and anxious
- sleep better
- feel more in control
- relieve some of your cancer symptoms
- relieve the side effects of your cancer treatment.

## Using complementary therapies safely

You might be advised not to have complementary therapies. This is because it is not safe to have them if you have certain types of cancer or if you are having certain treatments. Your doctor will be able to give you more information about this. It is very important to tell your cancer doctor if you are thinking about having any complementary or alternative therapy.

Always use a registered therapist and always let them know you have cancer. The British Complementary Medicine Association (BCMA) – see page 98 – can give you the names of registered therapists. Remember to check the cost of treatment beforehand.

Our booklet **Cancer and complementary therapies** has more information on different types of therapy.

## Alternative therapies

Alternative therapies are used instead of conventional medical treatments. But they are not tested in the same way. No alternative therapies have been proven to cure cancer or slow its growth and some may be harmful.

**We do not advocate the use of alternative therapies.**

'Complementary therapies to me mean a bit of indulgence, massage, "me time".'

**Pat**

# Self-help and support groups

Joining a self-help or support group can have many benefits. These groups offer a chance to talk to other people who may be in a similar situation to you, and who may be facing the same challenges.

## Who are support groups for?

Most groups cover all types of cancer. They can also help carers, family and friends come to terms with what is happening, how best to help and how to take care of themselves. Other groups are for people with a specific type of cancer, such as a breast care group or a laryngectomy club.

## What to expect at a support group

Each cancer support group is different, but you can expect a warm welcome from someone who has been in the group for some time. You will be introduced to other members, and have the opportunity to talk about yourself and your experience of cancer.

You are not expected to talk about anything you don't want to. It can take a few visits before feeling comfortable enough to talk about personal matters.

Some groups are made up of a few people who meet regularly in someone's front room. Others are much larger and might have premises or a drop-in centre.

Most groups provide training in listening skills for the members or volunteers so they can give you their undivided, non-judgemental, caring attention. Meetings could include an activity, a social event or a talk from a guest speaker.

Contact the organiser if you have questions about how the group works. They can tell you what to expect, how big the group is and common discussion topics and activities. It may help to go along to see what the group is like before making a decision.

You may be able to access support services through the group, including complementary therapies, counselling or bereavement support.

Most groups are free. Some may charge for tea and biscuits or welcome donations for the complementary therapies or counselling they offer.

## How do I find a support group?

You can search for support groups near you by visiting **macmillan.org.uk/in-your-area**

You can also speak to your GP, a Macmillan nurse or a cancer support specialist on **0808 808 00 00** to find out about local support groups.

Every group is very different. If there is more than one group in your area it may be helpful to contact a selection of them to see which one suits you best.

# Other things that may help

## Releasing tension

Tension can often be released by talking to people. That may be family or friends, our cancer support specialists on **0808 808 00 00**, your hospital staff or GP, or any of the organisations on pages 97 to 103.

Sometimes you may feel like everything is getting too much for you. If you feel this way, try thumping a cushion or pillow, turning the radio or CD player up very loud, or screaming. Having a good cry can also help release emotions. These things won't do anyone any harm and they may leave you feeling much better.

You may find it helps to write down how you feel. Keeping a diary or journal may help you express your fears and worries, without having to talk them through with other people. You could use the table on page 31 to write down your hopes and fears.

You could also express yourself through drawing, painting, playing music or another creative hobby.

## Recording feelings

You may like to use the table on the opposite page to write about your good and bad days. This may help you decide on steps you can take to have more good days.



## Good days

---

I slept well



## Bad days

---

I woke up at 3am and felt  
tired for the rest of the day

## Next steps

Write down my worries before I go to bed



## Changing priorities

Cancer often causes people to think about their lives and their priorities. Some people make big changes to their lives, such as changing their job. Or some start a new hobby to meet people. Doing something new and different may also help you feel better.

## Avoiding alcohol and recreational drugs

It may feel good at first to have a few drinks or take recreational drugs to help you forget how you are feeling. However, this is only a short-term solution. Alcohol and drugs can cause problems and damage relationships with family or friends. In the long-term, alcohol and recreational drugs may seriously damage your health.

Taking recreational drugs can also change the effect of some painkillers, so your doctor or nurse may ask you about this. It is important to be open with them about using these drugs.

# Practical everyday tips

If you are finding it difficult to manage your feelings, it can help to take things one day at a time and not look too far ahead. You may find that life gets easier to cope with as time passes. Doing even the smallest tasks may help you feel better:

- If you can, get up and dressed every day.
- Try to eat well every day. If you have eating problems or a poor appetite, talk to your doctor or nurse.
- Try to exercise regularly.
- Keep to a regular sleeping pattern if you can.
- Stay in contact with your family and friends.
- Share your feelings with someone close or a professional.
- Accept offers of help and ask people for support.
- Find some time for yourself every day when you can fully relax.
- Make plans to do things you enjoy to give yourself something to look forward to.
- Give yourself small goals to achieve.
- Celebrate your successes, however small.
- Recognise when you are feeling run down and stressed. If you feel like this, see your doctor for advice.
- If you feel unwell, get some extra rest and don't delay seeing your doctor.

The Mental Health Foundation also has information on how to look after your mental health at **[mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-mental-health](https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-mental-health)**



HOUSING  
COSTS

LIVING CAN

TAKE  
ACTION

LIVING WITH  
IMPROVED WHO  
HAS CANCER

HOUSING  
COSTS

HOUSING  
COSTS

CANCER  
AND OL  
PEOPLE

# FURTHER INFORMATION

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# About our information

We provide expert, up-to-date information about cancer. And all our information is free for everyone.

## Order what you need

You may want to order more leaflets or booklets like this one. Visit **be.macmillan.org.uk** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

We have booklets on different cancer types, treatments and side effects. We also have information about work, financial issues, diet, life after cancer and information for carers, family and friends.

All of our information is also available online at **macmillan.org.uk/cancerinformation**. There you'll also find videos featuring real-life stories from people affected by cancer, and information from health and social care professionals.

## Other formats

We also provide information in different languages and formats, including:

- audiobooks
- Braille
- British Sign Language
- Easy Read booklets
- ebooks
- large print
- translations.

Find out more at **macmillan.org.uk/otherformats**

If you'd like us to produce information in a different format for you, email us at **cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

## Help us improve our information

We know that the people who use our information are the real experts. That's why we always involve them in our work. If you've been affected by cancer, you can help us improve our information.

We give you the chance to comment on a variety of information including booklets, leaflets and fact sheets.

If you'd like to hear more about becoming a reviewer, email **[reviewing@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:reviewing@macmillan.org.uk)** You can get involved from home whenever you like, and we don't ask for any special skills – just an interest in our cancer information.



# Other ways we can help you

At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything, and we're here to support you. No one should face cancer alone.

## Talk to us

If you or someone you know is affected by cancer, talking about how you feel and sharing your concerns can really help.

### Macmillan Support Line

Our free, confidential phone line is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm. Our cancer support specialists can:

- help with any medical questions you have about your cancer or treatment
- help you access benefits and give you financial guidance
- be there to listen if you need someone to talk to
- tell you about services that can help you in your area.

Call us on **0808 808 00 00** or email us via our website, **[macmillan.org.uk/talktous](https://macmillan.org.uk/talktous)**

## Information centres

Our information and support centres are based in hospitals, libraries and mobile centres.

There, you can speak with someone face to face.

Visit one to get the information you need, or if you'd like a private chat, most centres have a room where you can speak with someone alone and in confidence.

Find your nearest centre at **[macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres](https://macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres)** or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

## Talk to others

No one knows more about the impact cancer can have on your life than those who have been through it themselves. That's why we help to bring people together in their communities and online.

### Support groups

Whether you are someone living with cancer or a carer, we can help you find support in your local area, so you can speak face to face with people who understand. Find out about support groups in your area by calling us or by visiting **[macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport](https://macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport)**

## Online community

Thousands of people use our online community to make friends, blog about their experiences and join groups to meet other people going through the same things. You can access it any time of day or night. Share your experiences, ask questions, or just read through people's posts at **[macmillan.org.uk/community](https://macmillan.org.uk/community)**

## The Macmillan healthcare team

Our nurses, doctors and other health and social care professionals give expert care and support to individuals and their families. Call us or ask your GP, consultant, district nurse or hospital ward sister if there are any Macmillan professionals near you.

'Everyone is so supportive on the online community, they know exactly what you're going through. It can be fun too. It's not all just chats about cancer.'

Mal



## Help with money worries

Having cancer can bring extra costs such as hospital parking, travel fares and higher heating bills. If you've been affected in this way, we can help.

### Financial guidance

Our financial team can give you guidance on mortgages, pensions, insurance, borrowing and savings.

### Help accessing benefits

Our benefits advisers can offer advice and information on benefits, tax credits, grants and loans. They can help you work out what financial help you could be entitled to. They can also help you complete your forms and apply for benefits.

### Macmillan Grants

Macmillan offers one-off payments to people with cancer. A grant can be for anything from heating bills or extra clothing to a much-needed break.

Call us on **0808 808 00 00** to speak to a financial guide or benefits adviser, or to find out more about Macmillan Grants. We can also tell you about benefits advisers in your area. Visit **[macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport](https://macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport)** to find out more about how we can help you with your finances.

## Help with work and cancer

Whether you're an employee, a carer, an employer or are self-employed, we can provide support and information to help you manage cancer at work. Visit **[macmillan.org.uk/work](https://macmillan.org.uk/work)**



### Macmillan's My Organiser app

This free mobile app can help you manage your treatment, from appointment times and contact details, to reminders for when to take your medication. Search 'My Organiser' on the Apple App Store or Google Play on your phone.

# Other useful organisations

There are lots of other organisations that can give you information or support.

## Counselling and emotional support

### **Anxiety UK**

**Infoline** 08444 775 774  
(Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 5.30pm)

**Text service** 07537 416 905

#### **Email**

[support@anxietyuk.org.uk](mailto:support@anxietyuk.org.uk)

**[www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)**

Supports people living with anxiety, stress and anxiety-based depression through information, support and other services.

This includes access to reduced-cost therapy with approved therapists all over the UK.

### **AWARE**

**Tel** 028 9035 7820

**Email** [help@aware-ni.org](mailto:help@aware-ni.org)

**[www.aware-ni.org](http://www.aware-ni.org)**

Supports people with depression and bipolar disorder in Northern Ireland. Offers a support mail service and a network of support groups where group members can share information, discuss options and support each other. Also supports carers.

**British Association  
for Counselling and  
Psychotherapy (BACP)**

**Tel** 01455 883 300

**Email** [bacp@bacp.co.uk](mailto:bacp@bacp.co.uk)

**[www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)**

Promotes awareness of counselling and signposts people to appropriate services across the UK. You can search for a qualified counsellor at **[itsgoodtotalk.org.uk](http://itsgoodtotalk.org.uk)**

**British Complementary  
Medicine Association  
(BCMA)**

**Tel** 0845 345 5977

(Mon to Tue and Thu to Fri,  
10am to 5pm)

**Email** [office@bcma.co.uk](mailto:office@bcma.co.uk)

**[www.bcma.co.uk](http://www.bcma.co.uk)**

Has a code of conduct, and a UK-wide list of registered practitioners who belong to member organisations. Can provide practitioners' telephone numbers.

**Free Psychotherapy Network  
Email**

[peter@empathyzone.com](mailto:peter@empathyzone.com)

**[www.freepsychotherapy  
network.com](http://www.freepsychotherapynetwork.com)**

A group of psychotherapists offering free and low-fee psychotherapy to people on low incomes and benefits in England and Scotland.

**Helplines Partnership**

**Tel** 0300 330 7777

**Email** [info@helplines.org](mailto:info@helplines.org)

**[www.helplines.org](http://www.helplines.org)**

A membership body for organisations that provide helpline services in the UK. Search for a helpline that deals with a particular concern, including health, terminal illness, family, bereavement, sexuality, addiction and more.

## **LGBT Foundation**

**Helpline** 0345 3 30 30 30

(Mon to Fri, 10am to 10pm,  
Sat, 10am to 6pm)

**Email** [helpline@lgbt.foundation](mailto:helpline@lgbt.foundation)

**www.lgbt.foundation**

Has information for LGBT people about cancer, being a carer, relationships and mental health. Has a helpline, email advice and counselling.

## **Mental Health Foundation**

**Tel** 020 7803 1100

**www.mentalhealth.org.uk**

A UK-wide charity focusing on preventing mental health problems. Produces evidence-based information about mental health and the steps people can take to reduce their mental health risks. Offers an online mindfulness programme called Be Mindful Online.

## **Mind**

**Infoline** 0300 123 3393

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 6pm)

**Text** 86463

**Email** [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

**www.mind.org.uk**

Works for a better life for everyone with experience of mental distress. Provides information on all aspects of mental health, including legal matters. Campaigns for better understanding and offers mental health services through a network of local Mind associations in England and Wales.

### **Relate**

**Tel** 0300 100 1234

#### **Email**

relate.enquiries@relate.org.uk

**www.relate.org.uk**

Offers advice, relationship counselling, sex therapy, workshops, mediation, consultations and support in England and Wales.

### **Relate Northern Ireland**

**Tel** 028 9032 3454

**Email** office@relateni.org

**www.relateni.org**

Provides relationship and family counselling across Northern Ireland.

### **Relationships Scotland**

**Infoline** 0345 119 2020

(Mon to Fri, 9.30am to 4.30pm)

**Email** enquiries@

relationships-scotland.org.uk

**www.relationships-scotland.org.uk**

Provides relationship counselling, mediation and family support across Scotland.

### **Royal College of Psychiatrists**

**Tel** 020 7235 2351

**Email** reception@rcpsych.ac.uk

**www.rcpsych.ac.uk**

The professional body for psychiatrists in the UK and Northern Ireland. Produces information leaflets for the public that you can download from the website.

### **Samaritans**

**Helpline** 116 123

**Email** [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)**

Samaritans branches are located across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Provides confidential and non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

### **SANE**

**Helpline** 0300 304 7000

(Daily, 4.30pm to 10.30pm)

**[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)**

Offers information and advice on all aspects of mental health for people with mental illness, or their families or friends. Also offers support through the helpline, textcare service and online forum.

### **Scottish Association for Mental Health**

**Tel** 0141 530 1000

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)

**[www.samh.org.uk](http://www.samh.org.uk)**

Offers support, information and advice on various aspects of mental health across Scotland.

### **Young Minds**

**Tel** 020 7089 5050

**Email** [yemenquiries@](mailto:yemenquiries@youngminds.org.uk)

[youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)

**[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)**

Aims to improve the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

## General cancer organisations

### Cancer Black Care

**Tel** 020 8961 4151

**Email**

[info@cancerblackcare.org.uk](mailto:info@cancerblackcare.org.uk)

**[www.cancerblackcare.org.uk](http://www.cancerblackcare.org.uk)**

Offers UK-wide information and support for people with cancer, as well as their friends, carers and families, with a focus on those from BME communities.

### Cancer Focus

#### Northern Ireland

**Helpline** 0800 783 3339

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 1pm)

**Email**

[helpline@cancerfocusni.org](mailto:helpline@cancerfocusni.org)

**[www.cancerfocusni.org](http://www.cancerfocusni.org)**

Offers a variety of services to people affected by cancer in Northern Ireland, including a free helpline, counselling and links to local support groups.

### Cancer Research UK

**Helpline** 0808 800 4040

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)

**[www.cancerresearchuk.org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)**

A UK-wide organisation that has patient information on all types of cancer. Also has a clinical trials database.

### Cancer Support Scotland

**Tel** 0800 652 4531

(Mon to Fri, 9am to 5pm)

**Email** [info@](mailto:info@cancersupportscotland.org)

[cancersupportscotland.org](http://cancersupportscotland.org)

**[www.cancersupportscotland.org](http://www.cancersupportscotland.org)**

Runs cancer support groups throughout Scotland. Also offers free complementary therapies and counselling to anyone affected by cancer.

**Maggie's Centres****Tel** 0300 123 1801**Email** enquiries@  
maggiescentres.org**www.maggiescentres.org**

Has a network of centres in various locations throughout the UK. Provides free information about cancer and financial benefits. Also offers emotional and social support to people with cancer, their family, and friends.

**Marie Curie****Helpline** 0800 090 2309(Mon to Fri, 8am to 6pm,  
Sat, 11am to 5pm)**www.mariecurie.org.uk**

Marie Curie nurses provide free end-of-life care across the UK. They care for people in their own homes or in Marie Curie hospices, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

**Tenovus****Helpline** 0808 808 1010

(Daily, 8am to 8pm)

**Email**

info@tenovuscancercare.org.uk

**www.tenovuscancercare.  
org.uk**

Aims to help everyone in the UK get equal access to cancer treatment and support. Funds research and provides support such as mobile cancer support units, a free helpline, an 'Ask the nurse' service on the website and benefits advice.



## **Cancer registries**

### **The cancer registry**

A national database that collects information on cancer diagnoses and treatment. This information helps the NHS and other organisations plan and improve health and care services. There is one in each country in the UK:

#### **National Cancer Registration Service for England**

**Tel** 020 7654 8000

**Email** [enquiries@phe.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@phe.gov.uk)

**[www.ncr.nhs.uk](http://www.ncr.nhs.uk)**

#### **Scottish Cancer Registry**

**Tel** 0131 275 7777

**Email** [nss.csd@nhs.net](mailto:nss.csd@nhs.net)

**[www.isdscotland.org/  
Health-Topics/Cancer/  
Scottish-Cancer-Registry](http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Cancer/Scottish-Cancer-Registry)**

#### **Welsh Cancer Intelligence and Surveillance Unit (WCISU)**

**Tel** 02920 373500

**Email** [general.enquiries@  
wales.nhs.uk](mailto:general.enquiries@wales.nhs.uk)

**[www.wcisuwales.nhs.uk](http://www.wcisuwales.nhs.uk)**

#### **Northern Ireland Cancer Registry**

**Tel** 028 9097 6028

**Email** [nicr@qub.ac.uk](mailto:nicr@qub.ac.uk)

**[www.qub.ac.uk/nicr](http://www.qub.ac.uk/nicr)**

## Organisations that can help with physical activity

### Paths for All

**Tel** 01259 218888

**Email** [info@pathsforall.org.uk](mailto:info@pathsforall.org.uk)  
**www.pathsforall.org.uk**

A partnership of more than 20 national organisations promoting walking for health in communities and workplaces throughout Scotland. Free group walks are organised every week.

### Ramblers (Wales)

**Tel** 029 2064 4308

**Email** [cerddwyr@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:cerddwyr@ramblers.org.uk)  
**www.ramblers.org.uk**

Works to promote walking for pleasure, health, leisure and transport to everyone in Wales. Organises guided walks throughout the year.

### Walk NI

**Tel** 028 9030 3930

**Email** [info@walkni.com](mailto:info@walkni.com)  
**www.walkni.com**

Has details of walking trails throughout Northern Ireland and links to walking groups in your local area.

### Walking for Health

**Tel** 020 7339 8541

**Email** [walkingforhealth@ramblers.org.uk](mailto:walkingforhealth@ramblers.org.uk)  
**www.walkingforhealth.org.uk**

England's largest network of health walks schemes run by the Ramblers. Organises free, guided health walks across England.



You can search for more organisations on our website at [macmillan.org.uk/organisations](http://macmillan.org.uk/organisations) or call us on 0808 808 00 00.

## Disclaimer

We make every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate and up to date but it should not be relied upon as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. So far as is permitted by law, Macmillan does not accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this publication, or third-party information or websites included or referred to in it. Some photos are of models.

## Thanks

This booklet has been written and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been approved by our Chief Medical Editor, Dr Tim Iveson, Macmillan Consultant Medical Oncologist.

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## Sources

We've listed a sample of the sources used in the publication below. If you'd like further information about the sources we use, please contact us at **[cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk](mailto:cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk)**

Buckman, R. Cancer is a word, not a sentence. Collins. 2011.  
Mind. Anxiety and panic attacks. Available from: <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/#.WN0gOtLyvcs> (accessed February 2017)  
National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Social anxiety disorder: recognition, assessment and treatment. Clinical guideline. 2015. 159.

# Can you do something to help?

We hope this booklet has been useful to you. It's just one of our many publications that are available free to anyone affected by cancer. They're produced by our cancer information specialists who, along with our nurses, benefits advisers, campaigners and volunteers, are part of the Macmillan team. When people are facing the toughest fight of their lives, we're there to support them every step of the way.

We want to make sure no one has to go through cancer alone, so we need more people to help us. When the time is right for you, here are some ways in which you can become a part of our team.



## **Share your cancer experience**

Support people living with cancer by telling your story, online, in the media or face to face.

## **Campaign for change**

We need your help to make sure everyone gets the right support. Take an action, big or small, for better cancer care.

## **Help someone in your community**

A lift to an appointment. Help with the shopping. Or just a cup of tea and a chat. Could you lend a hand?

## **Raise money**

Whatever you like doing you can raise money to help. Take part in one of our events or create your own.

## **Give money**

Big or small, every penny helps. To make a one-off donation see over.

**Call us to find out more**

**0300 1000 200**

**[macmillan.org.uk/getinvolved](http://macmillan.org.uk/getinvolved)**

## Please fill in your personal details

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Other

Name

Surname

Address

Postcode

Phone

Email

Please accept my gift of £

(Please delete as appropriate)

I enclose a cheque / postal order /  
Charity Voucher made payable to  
Macmillan Cancer Support

OR debit my:

Visa / MasterCard / CAF Charity  
Card / Switch / Maestro

Card number

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Security number

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Signature

Date

/ /

## Don't let the taxman keep your money

Do you pay tax? If so, your gift will be worth 25% more to us – at no extra cost to you. All you have to do is tick the box below, and the tax office will give 25p for every pound you give.

- ☐ I am a UK tax payer and I would like Macmillan Cancer Support to treat all donations I make or have made to Macmillan Cancer Support in the last 4 years as Gift Aid donations, until I notify you otherwise.

I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand Macmillan Cancer Support will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.

Macmillan Cancer Support and our trading companies would like to hold your details in order to contact you about our fundraising, campaigning and services for people affected by cancer. If you would prefer us not to use your details in this way please tick this box. ☐

In order to carry out our work we may need to pass your details to agents or partners who act on our behalf.



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**FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR**

If you'd rather donate online go to [macmillan.org.uk/donate](https://macmillan.org.uk/donate)

Please cut out this form and return it in an envelope (no stamp required) to:  
Supporter Donations, Macmillan Cancer Support, FREEPOST LON15851,  
89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UQ

This booklet is about the main emotions that many people with cancer have. This may be after diagnosis, during treatment or after treatment has ended. There is also information for carers, family members and friends.

We hope you find this booklet helpful in dealing with some of the feelings you may have. There are also practical ideas of things you could try that may help you cope.

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm, or visit **macmillan.org.uk**

Would you prefer to speak to us in another language? Interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use. Are you deaf or hard of hearing? Call us using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app.

Need information in different languages or formats? We produce information in audio, eBooks, easy read, Braille, large print and translations. To order these visit **macmillan.org.uk/otherformats** or call our support line.

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