

# SHARING THE CANCER JOURNEY

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Use this guide to help you, your loved ones, and your cancer care team talk openly and **support each other on your cancer journey.**

(Tap on a section below to get started)



**ENGAGING WITH YOUR CARE TEAM**



**HELPING FRIENDS OR FAMILY  
ENGAGE WITH THEIR CARE TEAM**



**RECEIVING SUPPORT FROM OTHERS**



**BEING A SUPPORTER**



# ENGAGING WITH YOUR CARE TEAM



Your cancer care team will include the doctors, nurses, and other health professionals you meet after your diagnosis (when you find out you have cancer). Talking openly and honestly with your team will help you get care that works as well as possible.

## TAKING A ROLE IN YOUR CARE



**Your cancer care team are the experts on your diagnosis and how it can be treated. You are the expert on you.**

- Know that any question you have is worth asking
- Share any concerns you have with your care team
- Bring a friend or family member when you meet with your care team to help you guide the conversation, take notes, and make sure all your questions are answered



# ENGAGING WITH YOUR CARE TEAM *(continued)*

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CARE TEAM

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When meeting with your cancer care team, it can help to have questions in mind. Here are some questions that could be helpful to ask at different points in your cancer journey.

### 1 When you learn about your diagnosis:

- What kind of cancer do I have?
- What stage is the cancer, and what does that stage mean for me?
- Will I need to do any other tests, when will I get the results of those tests, and who will help me understand those results?
- What is a biomarker, and how might it help my doctor select the right treatment for me?

### 2 When discussing a treatment plan:

- What is the goal of treatment?
- What are the treatment choices available to me?
- Do you recommend one treatment in particular? Why?
- How soon do I need to start treatment?
- What side effects might I have from this treatment?
- How might the treatment we choose affect my work, family, and daily activities?

### 3 Before and during treatment:

- What can I do to get ready for treatment?
- How will we know that the treatment is working?
- Is there anything I can do to help my treatment work as well as possible?



# ENGAGING WITH YOUR CARE TEAM *(continued)*

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR TREATMENT OPTIONS

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There are many different treatment options for cancer, but they may not all be options for you. You and your care team will consider many factors when deciding on a treatment plan.



**In general, your treatment options will depend on:**

- The type of cancer you have
- What stage your cancer is
- The results of tests you may get to find out more about your cancer
- Your overall health
- Any other health conditions you may have, such as diabetes or kidney problems
- The treatment options your doctor recommends, which may include a clinical trial





# HELPING FRIENDS OR FAMILY ENGAGE WITH THEIR CARE TEAM



## KEEPING TRACK OF INFORMATION

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A cancer diagnosis and the steps that follow can be overwhelming for your friend or family member. During this time they may need help, support, and encouragement. You can help by keeping track of:

- **The names and titles** of each member of their cancer care team
- **Questions** that your friend or loved one wants to ask, and the answers given by their care team
- **Directions or information** given by the care team during an appointment or something your friend or loved one tells you directly

## UNDERSTANDING TREATMENT OPTIONS

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Finding the right treatment is one of the most important things that will help your friend or loved one face cancer. Their cancer care team will be the best source for information on treatment.



# RECEIVING SUPPORT FROM OTHERS



Sharing a cancer diagnosis with family and close friends can be really tough. However, sharing your diagnosis can help others give you support while you face this challenge.

## WHY SUPPORT MATTERS

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It is common to hear that staying positive is important for anyone dealing with a cancer diagnosis. While that may be true for some people, **feeling depressed, anxious, or even fearful about the diagnosis are also normal reactions to have.**



Whatever your reaction is, it may be helpful to **share and work through your thoughts and feelings with others.**



# RECEIVING SUPPORT FROM OTHERS *(continued)*

## TELLING OTHERS ABOUT YOUR DIAGNOSIS

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You are the only person who should decide when to share your diagnosis and who to share it with. Take these steps to help you decide.



### **Ask yourself how you feel about the diagnosis**

- Understanding your own thoughts and emotions can help prepare you for how others may respond.



### **Make a list of who you want to tell**

- You do not need to tell everyone you know that you have cancer. Those you want to tell also do not need to know right away or even at the same time.



### **Be prepared when friends or family ask how to help**

- When you share your diagnosis, the first thing many people will do is ask how they can help. Do not be afraid to have specific things in mind, even everyday tasks you'd like help with.



### **Think about anyone besides friends or family who you may also want to share your diagnosis with, such as:**

- A religious leader
- A therapist or counselor
- People you work with
- A support group of others who are facing cancer

### **BEFORE SHARING YOUR DIAGNOSIS, ASK YOURSELF:**

- What do I want to say?
- Where will I feel most comfortable sharing this information?
- If someone asks how they can help, what will I say to them?



# BEING A SUPPORTER

## WHY SUPPORT MATTERS

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When a friend or loved one learns they have cancer, they will have many different emotions and thoughts that may be hard to deal with. Depression, anxiety, and fear are all common reactions, and they may all happen at the same time.

**Being able to rely on others will help your friend or loved one in 2 ways:**



Providing emotional support to address negative thoughts and feelings



Helping with things like getting to doctor's appointments, managing possible side effects, or even just everyday tasks that may become more difficult over the course of their treatment

## HOW TO LISTEN

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When a friend or loved one tells you they have been diagnosed with cancer, focus on listening to them and understanding why they are telling you.

**Taking the following steps can help:**

- 1 Making sure that your friend or loved one has said everything they want to say before you respond
- 2 Trying to put your own feelings and fears aside
- 3 Letting them know you're available to talk and help as much as they need you to
- 4 Staying away from thoughts about how the diagnosis might have been prevented