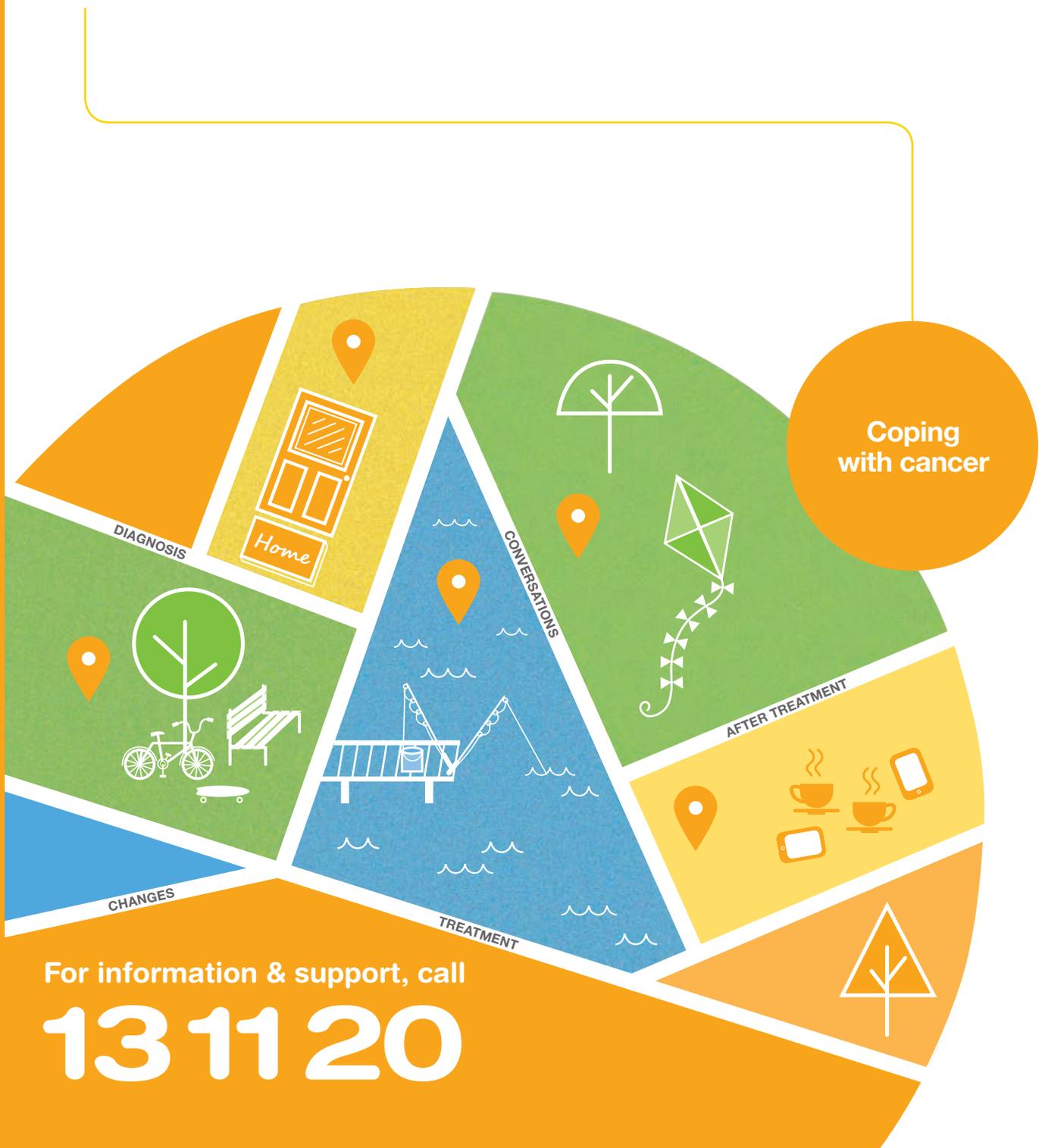


Talking to Kids About Cancer

A guide for people with cancer,
their families and friends



For information & support, call

13 11 20

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A guide for people with cancer, their families and friends

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This book is funded through the generosity of the people of Australia.

Note to reader

Always consult your doctor about matters that affect your health. This book is intended as a general introduction to the topic and should not be seen as a substitute for medical, legal or financial advice. You should obtain independent advice relevant to your specific situation from appropriate professionals, and you may wish to discuss issues raised in this book with them. All care is taken to ensure that the information in this book is accurate at the time of publication. Please note that information on cancer, including the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer, is constantly being updated and revised by medical professionals and the research community. Cancer Council Australia and its members exclude all liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred by use of or reliance on the information provided in this book.

Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia's peak non-government cancer control organisation. Through the eight state and territory Cancer Councils, we provide a broad range of programs and services to help improve the quality of life of people living with cancer, their families and friends. Cancer Councils also invest heavily in research and prevention. To make a donation and help us beat cancer, visit cancer.org.au or call your local Cancer Council.



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About this book

Explaining a diagnosis of cancer to children or teenagers can feel difficult and overwhelming. This book is designed as a starting point for having this conversation. Talking sensitively and honestly about the diagnosis can provide children with reassurance during a time of uncertainty and change.

Talking to Kids About Cancer focuses on when a parent has cancer, but much of the discussion will be relevant for anyone who needs to explain a cancer diagnosis to children or teenagers – for example, when a child’s sibling or friend has cancer, when their grandparent or another significant adult has cancer, or when a child has cancer.

Different chapters offer tips on talking to children throughout all stages of cancer, from breaking the news about a cancer diagnosis to coping with life after treatment. The book includes quotes and stories from people who have been affected by cancer (with some names changed for confidentiality), along with examples of what a parent or carer might want to say. These are just ideas and you will need to adapt what you say to suit your children’s ages and their individual personalities – you know your children best and can judge their ability to understand things.

You may like to share this book with grandparents, teachers, school counsellors, family friends and neighbours – anyone who talks with your children – to ensure they hear a consistent message about cancer and how it may affect your family.

If you need extra copies of this book or have any questions, simply call Cancer Council 13 11 20. You can also download a digital version from your local Cancer Council website (see back cover for details).

A note about the language in this book

To avoid gender-specific references, we have used third-person plural pronouns (they, their) in place of third-person singular pronouns (he or she, his or her) throughout this book. We have used the terms “kids” and “children” interchangeably and the term “teenagers” rather than “adolescents”, as this is how families tend to speak.



How to use this book

Each chapter of this book covers a particular aspect of discussing cancer with children – for example, talking about treatment. You can choose to read the entire book from cover to cover, but you may only need to refer to one or two chapters at a given time.

Please keep in mind that some sections of the book may be particularly difficult to read, such as Chapter 5: *Living with advanced cancer*. Many people do survive cancer, so this issue may not be relevant to your situation and you may prefer not to read this chapter. However, some readers will find it useful to have this information.

Families and children have generously shared their experiences with us. Their perspectives appear throughout the book as quotations and personal stories. The page margins feature colour-coded boxes that highlight particular types of information:



Tips



More information



Personal story



Key points

If you need help with any cancer-related issue, call Cancer Council 13 11 20 or see Chapter 6: *Finding support and information* at the end of this book.



Talking about cancer

Talking to kids about cancer can feel overwhelming. Your first reaction may be to keep the news from children or to delay telling them. Even though it can be difficult, research shows that being open and honest helps children cope with the cancer diagnosis of someone close to them.

Why talk to kids about cancer?

When someone is diagnosed with cancer, adults are sometimes hesitant to discuss the situation with children. Parents and other adults can feel overwhelmed by their own anxiety and fear, and their first reaction may be to protect children from those same strong emotions. They may be concerned about their children's reactions or worry the diagnosis will disrupt their children's school performance or friendships.

However, there are many reasons why a straightforward and honest discussion can help children.

You are the expert

To help you discuss the difficult subject of cancer with children, this book offers evidence-based, practical strategies that can build upon your existing strengths and knowledge. Sometimes it may take a few attempts before you find an approach that suits your family. Use your understanding of your children's individual personalities and needs to guide you.

Secrecy can make things worse

Children who are told about the illness of someone important to them tend to cope better than children who are kept in the dark. Trying to keep the diagnosis secret can be difficult. It can add to your stress – you may worry about whether you should tell, or feel guilty if you don't say something. You may need to change your daily routine without your children knowing why, which can be confusing for them.

Keeping secrets teaches children that it is okay for family members to lie to each other if a good reason exists. In turn, children may keep information from their parents if they think it will upset them.

You can't fool kids

Children are observant. No matter how hard you try to hide a cancer diagnosis, most children will suspect something is wrong. Even if it's not a parent who has cancer but a close relative, such as an aunt or grandparent, this can cause stress that kids will usually pick up on.

They will notice changes at home, such as your sadness, whispered conversations, closed doors, an increase in the number of phone calls or visitors, and possibly changes to family schedules. These signs may be more obvious to older children and teenagers, but even young children can pick up on change. They will work out that a secret exists, but that it should not be discussed. Not knowing the reason for the secret may leave them feeling powerless or disconnected from everyone else, without knowing why.



Cancer in different cultures

You may be reading this book because you work with children who have been affected by a cancer diagnosis. Before talking to someone else's child about cancer, it is important to understand and respect the wishes of the parents.

Cancer can have a range of meanings for different groups of people. Some cultures believe that cancer is caused by bad luck or that it is contagious or always fatal. Others may believe that the cancer has been sent to test them.

It is important to respect different ways of coping. If a family wants to keep a diagnosis private, organisations such as Cancer Council **13 11 20** or CanTeen (see page 17 for contact details) may be able to provide a way for children and other family members to discuss their feelings and concerns in a confidential setting.

Honesty can build trust with your child

Children can feel hurt if they suspect or discover they have not been told something important that affects their family. Sharing information shows you trust and value them, which can boost their self-esteem and ease their concerns. Hearing bad news is better than the worry they feel when they don't know what's happening.

The diagnosis may also be a chance for children to learn from their parents how to deal with complex feelings. Together you can all find ways to bounce back from difficult situations (resilience).

They might find out from someone else

Ideally, children should hear about a cancer diagnosis from their parents, guardian or a trusted family friend, particularly if it is the parent, a relative or close friend who has cancer.

If you tell friends and relatives about cancer in the family, but you don't tell your children, there is a chance your kids will learn about the cancer from someone else or overhear a conversation. Children often listen to adult conversations even when it seems like they are busy with their own activity and not paying attention. They may also look for a way to listen without being noticed.

Overhearing the news can make your children feel upset and confused. They may think the topic is too terrible for you to talk about, or that they are not important enough to be included in family discussions.

Children may also misunderstand information and think a situation is much worse than it is or make up their own explanation to fill in what they don't understand. They may feel afraid to ask questions. They might worry in silence or spread incorrect information to other children in the family. Teenagers, and even young children, may pick up on a few key words and search the internet for answers, which can lead them to unreliable websites.

“ Sooner or later they were going to find out. Why not tell them straightaway? I tell them frankly what is happening. I think they find it much easier to cope because they are ready for things. ”

Susie, mother of three children, aged 12, 13 and 16



Kids can cope

When a family is affected by cancer, it can be a challenging time for kids. You may wonder how they will get through it, but with age-appropriate information and good support, most children can bounce back from this difficult situation.

Children and young people learn about emotions and how to express them by watching others – especially their parents. A key factor in helping kids get through difficult times is to role model how to recognise, talk about and manage a range of emotions, e.g. “I’m feeling sad about Grandma’s diagnosis and I think I need to go for a walk”.

It is okay to admit to your child that what you are telling them is upsetting – let them know it’s natural to have strong feelings. We can’t stop kids from feeling sad, but if we share our feelings and give them information about what’s happening, we can support them in their sadness.

Children need a chance to talk

Talking to your children about cancer gives them the chance to ask questions (see pages 8–11 for some suggested approaches). Encourage your kids to share their thoughts and feelings, but don’t be surprised if they don’t want to talk when you do, and don’t push if your kids prefer not to talk. Suggest that children keep a journal to write down questions or thoughts that come up.

Sometimes kids, particularly teenagers, may feel guilty about burdening a sick parent or taking up a healthy parent’s time. So they will open up to an adult who is not their parent. That person may be a grandparent, an aunt or uncle, a family friend or their best friend’s parent.

When you can’t talk about cancer

Some parents don’t want to tell their children at all and try hard to keep the diagnosis secret. People have their own reasons for not sharing the diagnosis with their children, including cultural differences (see box, page 5), family circumstances, or an earlier death of a close relative from cancer. Sometimes you may want to wait to find out more about what the diagnosis means before telling your kids.

If you want to share the diagnosis with your children but your fear of saying or doing the wrong thing is keeping you from having this difficult conversation, talk with a psychologist or social worker, who may be able to help you develop a strategy. Keep in mind that talking about cancer often becomes easier over time.

Key points

- Start with questions to check what your kids know about cancer.
- Offer basic information and provide more details if they ask.
- Practise your response to potential questions before talking to kids.
- Explain that the cancer is not their fault and is not contagious.
- Assure them they will always be looked after, even if you can’t always do it yourself.
- Stop and listen to your children so you know how they really feel.
- Share your own feelings to help show children that it is okay to feel strong emotions about the situation.
- Children may react with different emotions. They may feel angry, sad or guilty. Reactions can also be physical, such as bedwetting or a change in sleeping patterns.
- Teenagers may find it hard to talk to you or show how they feel.
- Continue daily routines as much as you can. Talk about your children’s own activities as well, and let them know that it’s still okay to have fun.

Different views of cancer

Children's understanding of illness and their reactions to bad news will vary depending on their age, temperament and family experiences. You may find that siblings, even of similar ages, respond differently. These tables give an overview of children's possible reactions at different ages, which might help you work out how best to support them.



Newborns, infants and toddlers

Infants have little understanding of illness, but may pick up on their parents' anxiety and other feelings. They are aware of periods of separation from their parents and can get upset when a parent is not there. Toddlers may react to physical changes in their parent or relative (such as hair loss) or noticeable side effects (such as vomiting).

Possible reactions

- newborns and infants: becoming unsettled, especially if they need to be weaned suddenly
- newborns and infants: wanting to breastfeed more frequently for emotional comfort
- becoming fussy and cranky
- becoming clingy
- change in sleeping or eating habits
- colic
- toddlers: tantrums, more negativity (saying "no")
- return to, or more frequent, thumb sucking, bedwetting, baby talk, etc.

Suggested approaches

- maintain routines: ask any carers to follow the established schedules for your baby or toddler as much as possible
- give plenty of physical contact (e.g. hugging, holding, extra breastfeeds) to help them feel secure
- watch play for clues to how a child is coping
- use relaxation tapes, calming music or baby massage



3-5 years

Preschoolers

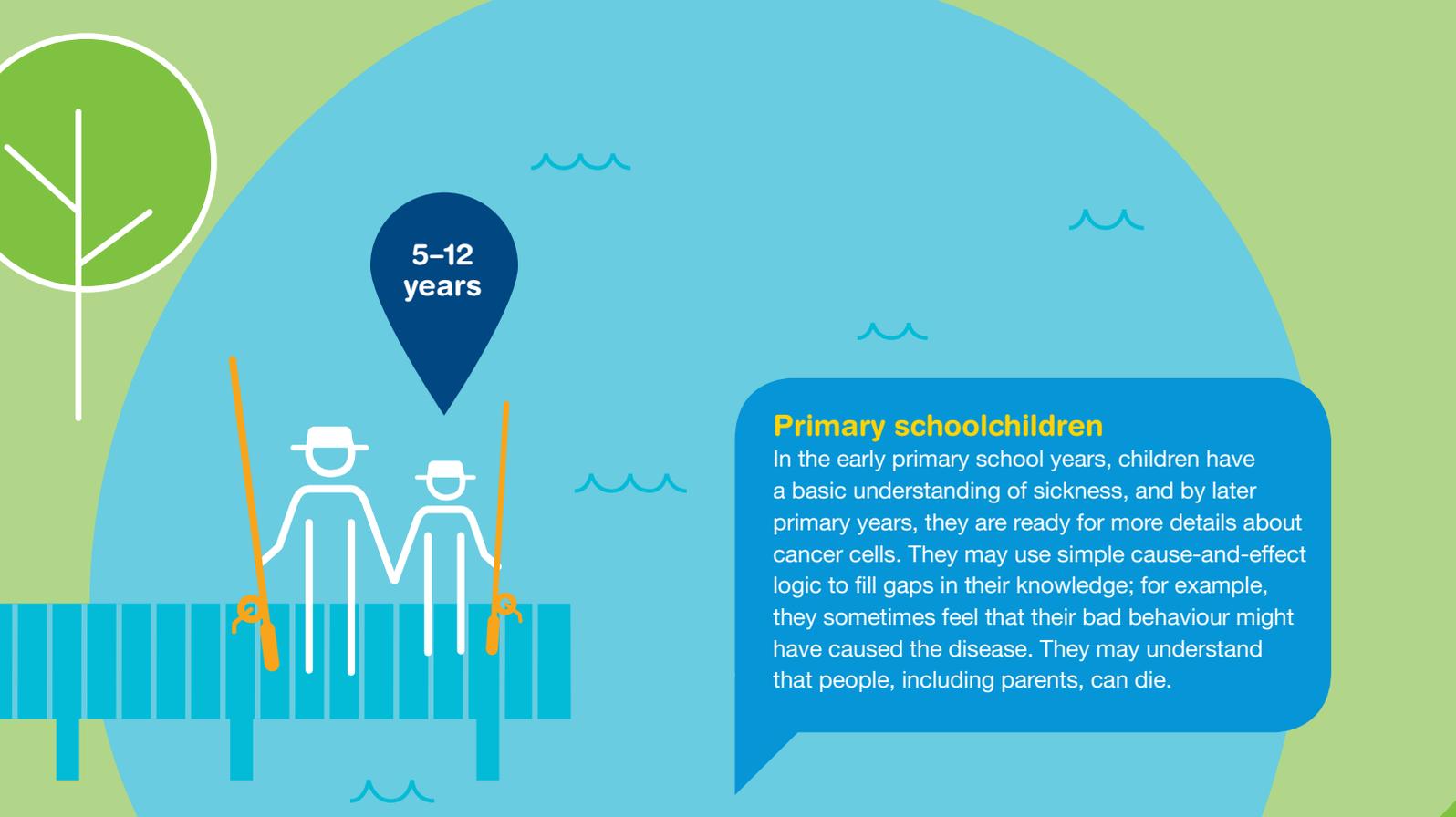
By the age of 3, children have a basic understanding of illness. Younger children may believe that they caused the illness (e.g. by being naughty or thinking bad thoughts). They may also think they can catch cancer. It is natural for young children to think everything is related to them – Did I cause it? Can I catch it? Who will look after me?

Possible reactions

- return to behaviour that is developmentally younger, e.g. sucking their thumb
- comfort-seeking behaviours, such as using a security blanket or special toy
- fear of the dark, monsters, animals, strangers and the unknown
- trouble falling asleep or sleeping through the night, refusal to sleep
- nightmares, sleepwalking or sleeptalking
- bedwetting
- stuttering or baby talk
- hyperactivity or apathy
- fear of separation from parents or other significant people, especially at bedtime and when going to preschool
- aggression (e.g. hitting or biting), saying hurtful things or rejecting the parent with the cancer diagnosis
- repeated questions about the same topic, even if it has been discussed several times

Suggested approaches

- provide brief and simple explanations about cancer; repeat or paraphrase when necessary
- use picture books, dolls or stuffed animals to talk about cancer
- read a story about issues such as nightmares or separation anxiety
- assure them that they have not caused the illness by their behaviour or thoughts, nor will they catch cancer
- explain what they can expect; describe how schedules may change
- reassure them that they will be taken care of and will not be forgotten
- encourage them to have fun
- listen and be alert to their feelings, which they may express through speech or play
- arrange opportunities for children to be physically active every day to use up excess energy, anxiety or aggression
- continue usual discipline and limit-setting



5-12
years

Primary schoolchildren

In the early primary school years, children have a basic understanding of sickness, and by later primary years, they are ready for more details about cancer cells. They may use simple cause-and-effect logic to fill gaps in their knowledge; for example, they sometimes feel that their bad behaviour might have caused the disease. They may understand that people, including parents, can die.

Possible reactions

- irritability, anxiety, guilt, envy
- sadness, crying
- physical complaints, e.g. headaches, stomach-aches
- trouble sleeping
- sudden worry about the well parent's health
- school refusal
- separation anxiety when going to school or away to camp
- returning to behaviours that may be developmentally younger
- hostile reactions, e.g. yelling or fighting, including towards the sick parent
- poor concentration, daydreaming, lack of attention
- unexplained change in school marks
- withdrawal from family and friends
- difficulty adapting to changes
- fear of new situations
- sensitivity to shame and embarrassment
- trying to be extra good
- nailbiting

Suggested approaches

- look for clues in their stories and play for how they feel, and let them know you care
- talk about cancer and treatment using books
- use sport, art or music to help children express and manage their feelings
- assure them that they did not cause the cancer by their behaviour or thoughts, and that they cannot catch it
- reassure them that they will be taken care of and tell them that it's okay to have fun
- let them know their other parent and relatives are healthy
- give them age-appropriate tasks to do around the house
- tell them you won't keep secrets and will always let them know what is happening
- suggest letting school know
- help them understand that what their schoolfriends say may not always be right – encourage them to check with you
- try to continue after-school activities to maintain routine and to encourage fun
- discuss the issue of dying if your kids bring up the topic (see pages 52–53)
- see also ideas for preschoolers (page 9)



Teenagers

During adolescence, young people start to think more like adults. As their ability for abstract thought develops, they are able to understand complex cause-and-effect relationships, such as illness and symptoms. With increasing maturity, teenagers understand that people get sick, but are more likely to deny fear and worry to avoid discussion.

Possible reactions

- wanting to be more independent and treated like an adult
- becoming very insecure and dependent on parents, or lapsing into previous behaviours, such as watching children's TV shows
- criticising support offered by adults
- preferring to confide in friends, and acting as if friends are more important than family
- depression or anxiety
- worry about being different and not fitting in
- anger and rebellion
- poor judgement and risk-taking behaviour, e.g. binge drinking, smoking, staying out late, unsafe sex
- withdrawal
- apathy
- physical symptoms caused by stress, e.g. stomach-aches, headaches
- hiding feelings – adults are less likely to see true reactions
- changes in academic performance
- worrying they will also get cancer (e.g. daughter of a woman with breast cancer or son of a man with prostate cancer)

Suggested approaches

- notice any changes in their behaviour and ask them about it – this can lead to a conversation about their concerns
- encourage them to talk about their feelings, but realise they may prefer to talk to friends or other trusted people
- use words and gentle touches to the arm or back to let them know you love them
- talk about role changes in the family
- provide privacy, as needed; highlight the importance of respecting privacy and using social media appropriately
- encourage them to keep up activities and friendships; talk about finding a balance between going out and staying at home
- set appropriate boundaries
- arrange opportunities for counselling
- don't expect them to take on too many extra responsibilities
- let them know of resources for learning more about cancer and getting support
- reassure them that you don't always need to talk about cancer – you still want to chat about things like homework, sport and friends
- see also ideas for younger children (opposite)

Support and information directory

Support services

<p>Camp Quality provides programs and services to strengthen the wellbeing of children aged 0–13 growing up with cancer</p>	<p>1300 662 267 campquality.org.au</p>
<p>Cancer Council provides a wide range of support and information services for people affected by cancer (see opposite page for more details)</p>	<p>13 11 20 For your local Cancer Council website, see back cover</p>
<p>CanTeen supports young people aged 12–25 affected by their own or a close family member’s cancer diagnosis</p>	<p>1800 835 932 canteen.org.au</p>
<p>headspace run by the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, provides mental health services to people aged 12–25</p>	<p>1800 650 890 headspace.org.au</p>
<p>Kids Helpline offers 24-hour telephone and online counselling for young people aged 5–25</p>	<p>1800 55 1800 kidshelpline.com.au</p>
<p>Lifeline offers 24-hour general crisis support</p>	<p>13 11 14 lifeline.org.au</p>
<p>ReachOut general information about mental health and wellbeing for young people going through tough times</p>	<p>au.reachout.com</p>
<p>Redkite offers financial, emotional and educational support for people aged 0–24 with cancer, as well as their families and networks</p>	<p>1800 REDKITE (1800 733 548) redkite.org.au</p>
<p>Ronald McDonald Learning Program provides assessment, therapy and tuition for young people whose education has been disrupted by serious illness</p>	<p>1300 307 642 rmhc.org.au/our-programs/learning-program</p>
<p>Young Carers Network provides information and support for people under 25 who care for someone with an illness, disability or mental health issue</p>	<p>youngcarersnetwork.com.au</p>
<p>youthbeyondblue supports young people aged 12–25 dealing with depression, anxiety and other mental health problems</p>	<p>1300 22 4636 youthbeyondblue.com</p>
<p>Griefline offers phone and online counselling</p>	<p>1800 642 066 grief.org.au</p>

Online information for children aged 3–13 years

Bearing Up Club

internet club for kids dealing with bereavement – once a child is registered, they can join an online chat room

bereavementcare.com.au

Kids' Guide to Cancer

Camp Quality's free educational app for children aged 8–13 who have a parent, sibling or other loved one with cancer – answers the common questions kids have about cancer

campquality.org.au/kidsguidetocancer

Online information for teenagers aged 12–18 years

CanTeen

aimed at young people aged 12–25 who are dealing with their own or a close family member's cancer diagnosis; peer community and discussions as well as access to counselling

canteen.org.au/cancer-information

riprap

UK site for teenagers who have a parent with cancer

riprap.org.uk

Stupid Cancer

US site for people aged 15–39 who are affected by cancer

stupidcancer.org

General online information

Cancer Council

reliable information about cancer by topic and by type; PDFs and ebooks of *Understanding Cancer* booklets and fact sheets; links to local programs and services

For your local Cancer Council website, see back cover

Cancer Australia

information about cancer, healthy living and clinical best practice from Australian Government cancer control agency

canceraustralia.gov.au

Children's Cancer

information about many aspects of children's cancer

childrenscancer.canceraustralia.gov.au

Victorian Paediatric Integrated Cancer Service (PICS)

information for families when a child is diagnosed with cancer

pics.org.au

American Cancer Society

detailed information about cancer types and topics from the largest voluntary health organisation in the US

cancer.org

Cancer Research UK

detailed information about the diagnosis and treatment of different cancer types

cancerresearchuk.org

Macmillan Cancer Support

information about cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment from the leading UK cancer charity

macmillan.org.uk

Picture books

Butterfly Kisses and Wishes on Wings
Ellen McVicker & Nanci Hersh, S.N., 2006
butterflykissesbook.com

Nowhere Hair
Sue Glader & Edith Buenen,
Thousand Words Press, 2010
nowherehair.com

In the Rainbow
Tracey Newnham, 2017
intherainbow.com.au

Safina and the Hat Tree
Cynthia Hartman & Hayley O'Brien, Nomota, 2004
talesforkids.com.au

For younger readers

Because...Someone I Love Has Cancer.
Kids' Activity Book, Terri Ades, American
Cancer Society, 2006

I'm a Kid Living with Cancer
Jenevieve Fisher & Casey Huie, Isaiah 11:6
Publishing, 2010

*Beginnings and Endings with Lifetimes
in Between*
Bryan Mellonie & Robert Ingpen, Penguin, 2005

I Miss You: A first look at death
Pat Thomas, Barron's Educational Series, 2001

Big Tree is Sick
Nathalie Slosse & Rocio Del Moral,
Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2017

The Memory Tree
Britta Teckentrup, Hachette, 2014

I Know Someone with Cancer series, 2018
bupa.co.uk/bupa-cancer-promise/i-know-someone-with-cancer

My Mum's Got Cancer
Dr Lucy Blunt, Jane Curry Publishing, 2012

For teenagers

Allie McGregor's True Colours
Sue Lawson, Black Dog Books, 2006

The Honest Truth
Dan Gemeinhart, Scholastic Press, 2015

The Fault in Our Stars
John Green, Penguin Books, 2014

My Parent Has Cancer and It Really Sucks
Maya Silva & Marc Silva, Sourcebooks, 2013

For adults

*Cancer in Our Family: Helping children cope
with a parent's illness (2nd ed.)*
Sue P. Heiney & Joan F. Hermann
American Cancer Society, 2013

*Raising an Emotionally Healthy Child
When a Parent Is Sick*
Paula K. Rauch & Anna C. Muriel,
McGraw-Hill Education, 2006

Glossary

Word	For younger children	For older children and teenagers
anaesthetic	A medicine that makes someone go to sleep so they don't feel anything when they have an operation.	A drug that stops people feeling pain during a procedure such as surgery. A general anaesthetic puts someone to sleep. A local anaesthetic just numbs one area of the body.
benign	A bump or lump on the body that isn't dangerous.	Not cancerous or malignant. Benign tumours are not able to spread to other parts of the body.
biopsy	When the doctor looks at cells in the body to see if they're healthy or not.	A test to diagnose cancer. The doctor takes small bits of tissue from the body and looks at them under a microscope to see if the cells have changed.
blood count	A test that checks how healthy the blood is.	A test that counts how many red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets there are in the blood.
cancer	Cancer is a disease that happens when bad cells stop the good cells from doing their job. These bad cells can grow into a lump and can spread to other parts of the body.	Cancer is the name for over 200 diseases in which abnormal cells grow and rapidly divide. These cells usually develop into a lump called a tumour. Cancer may spread to other parts of the body.
cells	The body is made up of billions of tiny things called cells, and each has a job to make your body work and stay healthy.	Cells are the building blocks of the body. Our bodies constantly make new cells to help us grow, to replace worn-out cells, or to heal damaged cells after an injury.
chemotherapy	Special medicine that kills the bad cancer cells.	A cancer treatment that uses drugs to kill cancer cells or slow their growth.
child life therapist	Someone who helps kids understand what is going on and how to have fun when they are in hospital.	A health professional who helps children manage the stress and anxiety of being in hospital through play and other coping strategies.
CT scan	A test that makes pictures so doctors can see what's happening inside the body.	A procedure that uses x-rays to create detailed, cross-sectional pictures of the body that show if cancer is present.
diagnosis	When the doctor works out what is making someone sick.	Working out what kind of disease someone has.
dietitian	Someone who helps people work out the healthiest foods to eat.	A health professional who supports and educates people about nutrition and diet.
donor	A person who gives blood or another part of their body to someone else.	The person who gives blood, tissue or an organ to another person for transplantation.
haematologist	A doctor who treats people whose blood makes them sick.	A specialist doctor who diagnoses and treats diseases of the bone marrow, blood and lymphatic system.
hormone therapy	A treatment that helps stop cancer cells growing.	A treatment that blocks the body's natural hormones, which sometimes help cancer cells grow. It is used when the cancer is growing in response to hormones.
immune system	The part of the body that helps someone stay well by getting rid of germs inside the body. It fights illness if somebody does get sick.	A network of cells and organs that defends the body against attacks by foreign invaders, such as bacteria and viruses, which can make people sick.

Word	For younger children	For older children and teenagers
immunocompromised	When someone gets sick very easily.	Weakening of the immune system, often caused by disease or treatment.
immunotherapy	A treatment that helps the body fight cancer.	Treatment that uses the body's own immune system to fight cancer.
intravenous (IV)	Putting a needle into a vein (where blood flows in the body).	Injected into a vein.
leukaemia	A type of cancer that starts in the blood.	A form of cancer where the cells that make blood start reproducing damaged cells at a fast rate.
lymph nodes	Lymph nodes are like filters that remove germs that could harm you. Sometimes, the germs can make some of the lymph nodes swell.	Small, bean-shaped structures that form part of the lymphatic system and help fight infection.
maintenance treatment	When someone is given medicine for a long time to help keep the cancer away.	Treatment given for months or years as part of the treatment plan. Often used for acute lymphoblastic leukaemia.
malignant	Another word for cancer.	Cancerous. Cells that are malignant can spread to other parts of the body.
medical oncologist	A special doctor who uses strong medicine to treat people with cancer.	A specialist doctor who treats cancer with chemotherapy.
metastasis (advanced cancer)	When the bad cells have travelled to another part of the body.	When cancer has spread from one part of the body to another. Also known as secondary cancer.
MRI scan	A way to take pictures of the inside of a person's body.	A medical scan that uses magnetism and radio waves to take detailed, cross-sectional, pictures of the body. MRI stands for "magnetic resonance imaging".
nausea	Feeling sick in the tummy.	Feeling as if you're going to vomit. Nausea is a common side effect of chemotherapy.
occupational therapist	Someone who helps people work out how to do things for themselves again after they have been sick.	A health professional who helps people solve physical and practical problems after illness, so they can lead independent lives.
palliative treatment	Sometimes the doctors and nurses can't stop the cancer from growing, and they will give someone medicine to make them feel better and get rid of any pain.	Treatment that reduces or stops symptoms but doesn't try to cure the cancer.
PET scan	A way of taking pictures of the inside of a person's body. The person is given an injection with a special liquid that shows up in the pictures and helps the doctors find cancer.	A scan in which a person is injected with a small amount of radioactive glucose solution. Cancerous areas show up brighter in the scan because they take up more of the glucose. PET stands for "positron emission tomography".
physiotherapist	Someone who helps a person's body get stronger after they have been sick.	A health professional who helps people recover their physical abilities after illness and surgery.
prognosis	What the doctors think might happen after treatment, and someone's chance of getting better.	The expected outcome of a disease. This helps doctors decide on treatment options.

Word	For younger children	For older children and teenagers
psychologist	Someone who helps people keep their minds healthy.	A health professional who helps people with their thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
radiation oncologist	A special doctor who uses x-rays that go into the body to kill cancer cells and make the cancer smaller.	A specialist doctor who treats cancer by prescribing and coordinating a course of radiation therapy.
radiation therapy (also called radiotherapy)	Invisible beams called x-rays that go into the body to kill cancer cells and make the cancer smaller.	The use of targeted radiation to kill or damage cancer cells so they cannot grow, multiply or spread. This is different to when you get x-rayed to see inside you (e.g. for a broken leg).
recurrence/relapse	When cancer comes back and the person feels sick again.	When cancer comes back after a period of improvement.
remission	When cancer goes away after treatment.	When cancer cells and symptoms reduce or disappear because of treatment. Remission may not mean that cancer is cured, but that it is now under control.
side effects	When a person has problems such as feeling tired or losing their hair after treatment. Some people might gain or lose weight, or have other changes. Most side effects go away after some time.	The unwanted effects of treatment, such as nausea, hair loss or fatigue. This is because treatment damages some healthy cells as well as the cancer cells. The healthy cells usually recover after a while (e.g. hair grows back).
stage	When the doctor tells the person how sick they are.	The extent of the cancer and whether it has spread from an original site to other parts of the body.
stem cell transplant	Stem cells are cells that make new blood in our bodies. Sometimes a person's cancer has to be treated with such strong medicine that their stem cells are destroyed. The person is given new stem cells to make them healthy again.	A treatment in which diseased blood cells are destroyed by high-dose chemotherapy or radiation therapy, then replaced with healthy stem cells. Stem cells are obtained from either the bone marrow or blood of the patient or a donor.
surgery	When someone has an operation and a doctor called a surgeon cuts out the cancer.	An operation to remove the cancer. Sometimes large parts of the body, such as a breast or the bladder, will be removed with the cancer.
targeted therapy	Special medicine that damages or kills cancer cells, but doesn't harm healthy cells.	Drugs that attack specific features of cancer cells while minimising harm to healthy cells.
tumour	A lump in the body that shouldn't be there. The lump may or may not be cancer.	A new or abnormal growth of tissue on or in the body. Tumours can be benign (not cancer) or malignant (cancer).
ultrasound	A test that allows doctors to look inside the body so they can work out if anything is wrong.	A scan that uses soundwaves to create a picture of part of the body. It helps show where and how big a tumour is.
x-ray	A test that takes pictures of the inside of the body.	A test that takes pictures of the inside of the body using high-energy waves.

References

1. SJ Ellis, CE Wakefield, G Antill, M Burns & P Patterson, "Supporting children facing a parent's cancer diagnosis: A systematic review of children's psychological needs and existing interventions", *European Journal of Cancer Care*, vol. 26, iss 1, 2017.
2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Cancer in Australia 2017*, Canberra, 2017.



Cancer Council 13 11 20

Being diagnosed with cancer can be overwhelming. At Cancer Council, we understand it isn't just about the treatment or prognosis. Having cancer affects the way you live, work and think. It can also affect our most important relationships.

When disruption and change happen in our lives, talking to someone who understands can make a big difference. Cancer Council has been providing information and support to people affected by cancer for over 50 years.

Calling 13 11 20 gives you access to trustworthy information that is relevant to you. Our cancer nurses are available to answer your questions and link you to services in your area, such as transport, accommodation and home help. We can also help with other matters, such as legal and financial advice.

If you are finding it hard to navigate through the health care system, or just need someone to listen to your immediate concerns, call 13 11 20 and find out how we can support you, your family and friends.

Cancer Council services and programs vary in each area. 13 11 20 is charged at a local call rate throughout Australia (except from mobiles).



If you need information in a language other than English, an interpreting service is available. Call 13 14 50.

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service. www.relayservice.gov.au



How you can help

At Cancer Council, we're dedicated to improving cancer control. As well as funding millions of dollars in cancer research every year, we advocate for the highest quality care for cancer patients and their families. We create cancer-smart communities by educating people about cancer, its prevention and early detection. We offer a range of practical and support services for people and families affected by cancer. All these programs would not be possible without community support, great and small.

Join a Cancer Council event: Join one of our community fundraising events such as Daffodil Day, Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, Relay For Life, Girls' Night In and other Pink events, or hold your own fundraiser or become a volunteer.

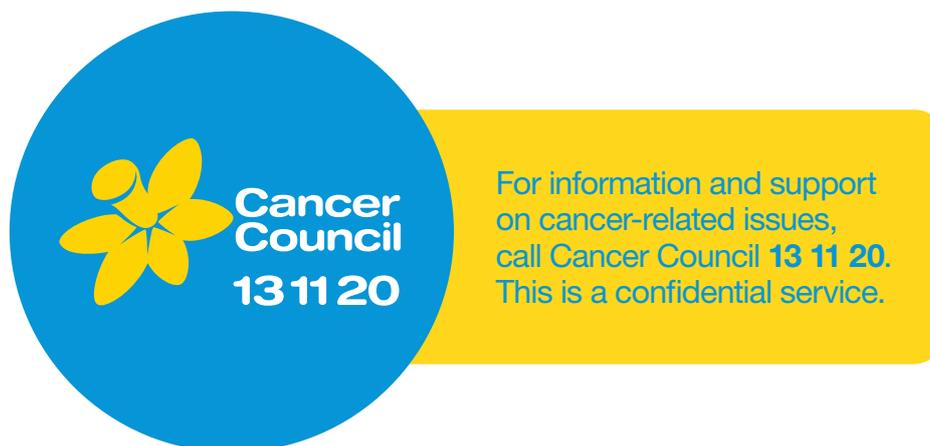
Make a donation: Any gift, large or small, makes a meaningful contribution to our work supporting people with cancer and their families now and in the future.

Buy Cancer Council sun protection products: Every purchase helps you prevent cancer and contribute financially to our goals.

Help us speak out for a cancer-smart community: We are a leading advocate for cancer prevention and improved patient services. You can help us speak out on important cancer issues and help us improve cancer awareness by living and promoting a cancer-smart lifestyle.

Join a research study: Cancer Council funds and carries out research investigating the causes, management, outcomes and impacts of different cancers. You may be able to join a study.

To find out more about how you, your family and friends can help, please call your local Cancer Council (see back cover).



Visit your local Cancer Council website

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actcancer.org

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 To support Cancer Council, call your local Cancer Council or visit your local website.*