



Oncology **Programme**

Write it on your heart
that every day is the
best day in the year.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson



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We recognise that it's sometimes difficult to have a totally positive outlook on the future as you deal with the impact of cancer and your treatment. Here we offer you ways to care for your emotional and mental health as well as your physical body.

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Here you'll find details about who to call for information, answers and support for you or your family members – right from the time of diagnosis; and a list of all the important cancer-related and medical scheme terms you'll be hearing.

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Foreword

There is perhaps nothing that prepares someone for hearing they have cancer.

However, we believe that knowledge is power. And feeling empowered can help you feel in control of your situation and help you strive for the best outcomes.

You are not alone in your fight against cancer; around 14 million people worldwide* hear the words “you have cancer” every year. Think of it as a worldwide family willing you on with understanding and compassion.

We wish you strength and courage on your journey. We wish to support you too, each step of the way.

That’s why we have created this book, which we hope helps you understand your condition, your treatment options, and how you can take positive steps in managing your illness, as well as where to find support groups and other information.

We hope the resources and ideas offered help you navigate your way.

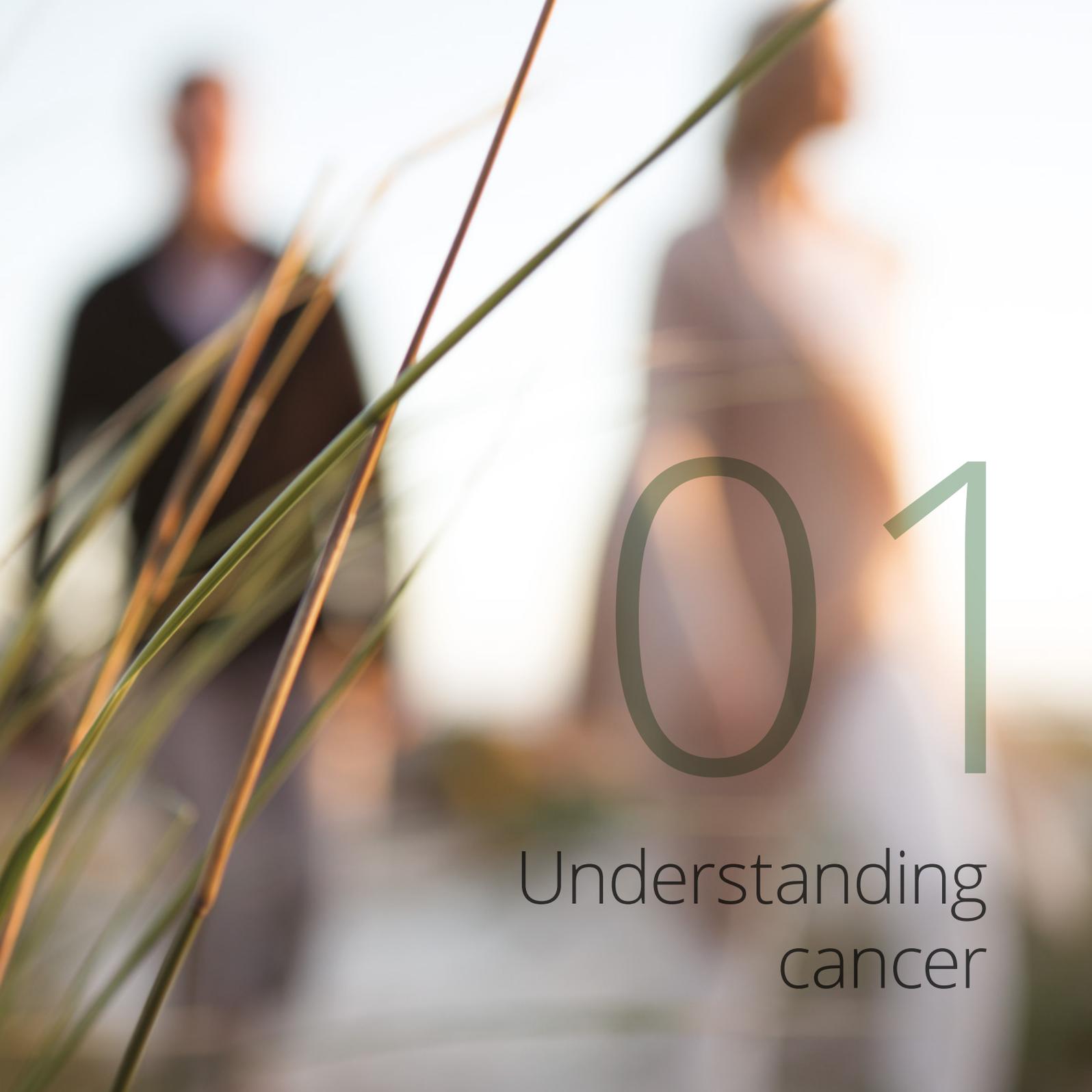
We hope that you feel inspired and motivated by this book, and that it helps keep you empowered and guides you on your journey.

* World Health Organization (2012 statistics)

Courage is resistance
to fear, mastery of fear
- not absence of fear.

~ Mark Twain



The background of the image is a soft-focus photograph. On the left, there are several tall, thin stalks of grass, some green and some with a golden-brown hue, extending diagonally across the frame. In the background, two people are visible but out of focus. One person on the left is wearing a dark jacket, and another person on the right is wearing a light-colored, possibly white, top. The overall lighting is bright and natural, suggesting an outdoor setting.

01

Understanding
cancer

Understanding cancer

Cancer is very much a personal journey because it affects people in many different ways, and people respond to the condition and treatment differently too. No two people have the same experience.

There is one common theme, though, people with cancer who are actively involved in their treatment and condition feel more in control and more empowered, which may even help in their recovery and improve the quality of their lives.

In this section, we explain what cancer is, the different treatment choices available, some common side effects, as well as ways to manage them.

The more you know, the more you can take part in your treatment. You are also better equipped to make the best decisions for yourself.

Because cancer is complex, it doesn't allow us to include every type of cancer or every possible scenario; so we have tried to include as much relevant information as possible.

Remember that your cancer experience is unique, you should not compare your treatment to that of others, even if they have the same diagnosis. Your cancer specialist remains the best person to explain your individual case.

Cancer is a life-threatening condition that can affect anyone. It is a complicated condition with more than 300 different types of cancer. Some kinds of cancer are relatively easy to detect and treat, while others are more complex.

How cancer starts

Cancer happens when cells that are not normal grow and spread very fast. These cells multiply and can form a tumour.

A cancer cell forms when there is a change in the genetic material – the control centre – of a normal cell. The cell starts to grow in an uncontrolled way. The cells are abnormal in the way they look and function, but the body's immune system does not recognise these as faulty, harmful cells, and so they continue to multiply.

Cancer is sometimes hard to control because these cells may be more aggressive: they do not stay in sheets of tissue like normal cells.

How cancer spreads

Healthy cells grow in an orderly, controlled way and are constantly renewing themselves. Each day cells die and are replaced by new cells. When a cell doesn't follow the normal pattern of growth and death, it grows uncontrollably, making a tumour or lump. Instead of dying, cancer cells continue to grow and outlive normal cells. As the cancer cells multiply, they invade and damage normal cells and can move into different parts of the body. Some cancers affect only a specific area, while other types can spread to other areas of the body far from the place where they started.

You will hear the treatment team use the terms "primary disease" and "secondary lesions". The original affected cells are called the primary disease. The cells that travel into other parts of the body are called secondary lesions. These cancer cells travel through the blood or the lymphatic system (which is responsible for draining tissue fluid back into the bloodstream, and fighting infection) to distant parts of the body where they form new tumours. This spreading process is called metastasis. Another name for secondary lesions is metastatic disease. For example, when breast cancer spreads to the lungs it is still referred to as breast cancer because that's where it started. The lung cancer will be called 'secondary' to breast cancer.

Cancer in SA

More than 100 000
South Africans
are diagnosed with
cancer every year

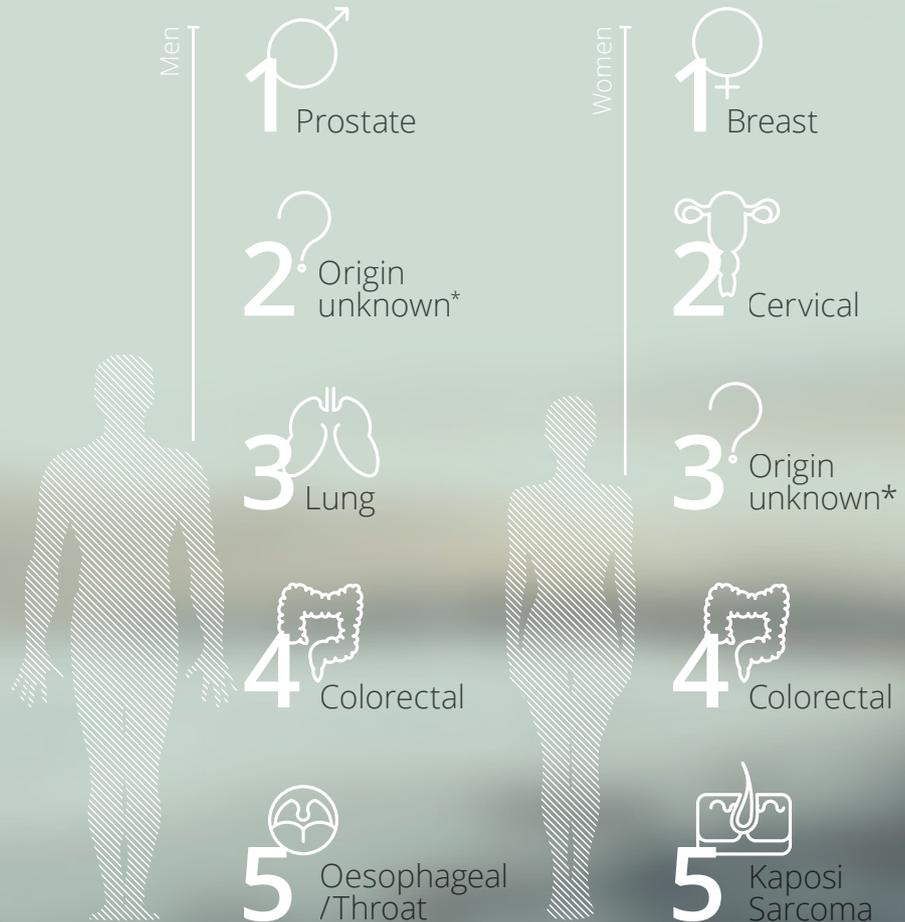
The South African cancer survival rate is



The 5 top cancers among South Africans

The primary site is unknown*, meaning that it is not possible to determine where the cancer started in the body.

* Source: CANSA
(2010 statistics)



The different types of cancer

There are many different types of cancer. Here are some examples:

- Carcinoma (in the epithelial cells which line the structures inside the body and also cover the surface of the whole body)
- Sarcoma (in connective tissue, muscle and bone)
- Glioma (in nerve tissue)
- Lymphoma, leukaemia, myeloma (in the blood system)
- Melanoma (in skin cells).

Why the immune system can't stop cancer cells

Your immune system protects your body against attack from diseases, germs, and foreign bodies. It also controls cell reproduction. When your body is healthy the immune system can fight infection, but when your immune system is not functioning well, different kinds of illness can develop, from allergies to cancer. Imagine two armies, the immune system and the cancer cells. The cancer cells will continue to grow if the immune system is unable to stop them. Eventually the cancer cells will override the immune system.

Do you have a question that is not answered here?

Please call the Discovery Care oncology team on **0860 99 88 77** or consult with your Oncology Liaison Manager.

Understanding what causes cancer

The exact causes of cancer are not known and very often there isn't an obvious reason. For a cancer to develop, the cells have to be damaged over a long period of time. Some of the ways that cells can be damaged include smoking, drinking too much alcohol, poor diet and hormonal influences. But very often people with cancer have not done anything to directly damage cells.

There are some reasons that might make you more prone to cancer, but the reasons the cells change from normal to abnormal are very complex and still mostly unknown. Some factors that may play a role are:

- Genetics (like in breast cancer)
- Physical or environmental factors (such as sunlight)
- Chemical factors (like smoking)
- Viruses (such as HIV)
- Hormones (such as testosterone in prostate cancer)
- Your immune status: the immune system is responsible for identifying foreign bodies and harmful cells and destroying them; this might not be happening if your immune system is lowered.

How cancer is diagnosed

There are a number of ways that doctors can detect cancer in the body. These include biopsies, surgery, CT scans, MRI scans, mammograms, ultrasound scans and blood tests.

A biopsy is often done to make a diagnosis of cancer. A surgeon cuts out a small piece of the tumour or tissue; this is then sent to a laboratory, where it is studied under a microscope to establish if it is cancer.

CT stands for computerised tomography scan. A CT scan combines several X-ray images of the body taken from different angles. These X-ray images are combined to give a detailed picture of your internal organs. Doctors are then able to look for tumours.

MRI stands for magnetic resonance imaging. The MRI scan uses powerful magnet fields and radio waves to create images. It transmits radio waves through the body and creates a detailed picture of the tissues of the body. It is a painless procedure but some people find it frightening to be in a small space because you move slowly through a narrow machine.

A mammogram is used to detect breast cancer, especially if the tumour cannot be felt. A special type of X-ray machine makes an image of the inner breast tissue. The breast may be X-rayed from above, the side, or both, and sometimes an angled view is taken. The breast is flattened between an X-ray plate and a plastic cover so that as much tissue as possible can be imaged. It is a simple and safe procedure, but can be uncomfortable. In the instance of an abnormal mammogram additional tests may be done. At the moment a mammogram is the best way of detecting early breast cancer.

Ultrasound uses sound waves to make images of the organs and tissues. The skin is covered with a jelly-like substance and a probe is passed over the skin. The image then comes up on a screen.

Bone scans are also used to find and track cancer that has spread. A bone scan starts with an injection of radioactive material. This is drawn to the area of the body where there seems to be extra bone activity: the body will be trying to repair damage here. Doctors are then able to see these areas using a special camera, which shows areas where the fluid was drawn into the bone.

What it means...

...when your doctor talks about stages of cancer

Your treating doctor may use a staging system to describe your cancer and plan your treatment. These stages tell how far the condition may have spread. Stages 1 and 2 show that the cancer is in an early phase. There is no spread and it often responds well to treatment. Stages 3 and 4 show that the cancer cells have invaded surrounding tissue, or spread through the blood vessels to different parts of the body. It is more complex to treat.

...when your doctor gives you a prognosis

Your cancer specialist may discuss your prognosis, this is an indication of the treatment and outcomes based on numerous factors that he or she takes into consideration. Where possible, this is based on statistical information gained from hundreds of patients with a similar condition.

...when you are in remission

Remission is a complete or partial disappearance of the signs and symptoms of cancer after treatment. In other words, the condition is under control at that moment in time.

...there is a difference between benign and malignant tumours

Benign tumours are non-cancerous growths that can form anywhere in the body. They do not invade surrounding tissue, grow into other organs or spread to other parts of the body. Some benign tumours can be serious if they put pressure on blood vessels, nerves or vital structures. Benign tumours may be surgically removed when necessary or your diagnosing doctor may discuss other treatment options such as medication or radiation.

Malignant tumours invade and destroy normal tissue from the time they grow. They have the ability to spread to other parts of the body. The word cancer only applies to malignant tumours.

Cancer is not discriminatory

It can affect anyone: men, women and children. It can happen at any age, and the reasons one person gets it rather than another aren't clear.

Before I was diagnosed with breast cancer I had never even heard of half the terms the doctors were using. I made it my mission to get informed, and soon I was telling them what I wanted them to do, rather than the other way around! Knowing what was happening to my body gave me renewed energy for the fight. I have been clear now for five years, and I have made some healthy changes in my life so I can stay fit and strong and cancer-free.



About treating cancer

Different types of cancers grow at different rates and respond to different treatments. Not all cancers form tumours. With blood cancers like leukaemia, the cancer cells form in the bone marrow and affect the development of blood cells. Your treatment will be aimed at your particular kind of cancer.

The sooner cancer is diagnosed and treatment can start, the better your chances for surviving the condition.

Your treating doctor or oncologist will aim to:

- 01** | Confirm the diagnosis of your specific type of cancer
- 02** | Establish the stage of its development
- 03** | Decide on the best treatment plan for your needs, and discuss these options with you.

How your doctor decides what treatment is best for you

A number of factors will be taken into account before your doctor recommends the most suitable treatment options for you. These include:

- What type of cancer you have
- How big the tumour is (if there is a tumour)
- How fast it is growing
- Whether it has spread to other parts of your body and if so, where and how far it has gone
- Your age, symptoms and general health

Cancer treatment has improved dramatically over the past 50 years and different therapies are now used together to improve chances of survival.



COURAGE

Doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice
at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow.

— *Mary Anne Radmacher*



About the usual cancer treatments

Some medicines can affect your cancer treatment. Before you start treatment give your doctor a list of all the medicine you are taking, including laxatives, flu medicine, painkillers, contraceptives and vitamins. Don't forget to mention any natural or herbal remedies too.

The three most common types of cancer treatment are: surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy

Surgery

Surgery is the most common and oldest form of cancer treatment. The entire tumour can be removed if it is in its early stages and it is easy to reach. Surgery may cure you of cancer if there is no spread of the disease to other organs and the whole tumour can be removed. Surgery may also be used to remove as much of the cancer as possible or to improve the effectiveness of the chemotherapy or radiation therapy. Often radiation or chemotherapy can be used before and/or after your surgery. This may be done to reduce the size of the tumour

and/or to ensure the cancer cells are destroyed. Surgery may also be used to relieve pain, like when the tumour is pressing on or causing a blockage to other organs. Surgery can also help to reconstruct the part of the body affected by cancer to try to make it as normal as possible. This is often done after a breast removal (mastectomy) or for patients who have cancer of the head, neck or face.

Radiation

Radiation (also known as radiotherapy) is another method of treating cancer. High energy particles or waves (such as electronic beams, protocols, gamma rays or X-rays) are transmitted to damage and destroy cancer cells. It is a localised treatment,

meaning that it is targeting a precision point on your body with the goal of damaging the cancerous cells. During radiation, both healthy and cancerous cells can be damaged, however the intention is to destroy as few healthy cells as possible. This can cause some side effects. For this reason the treatment is carefully planned, sometimes using high-tech 3-D computer technology. The area of the tumour is marked exactly on the body before the radiation treatment starts.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy uses medicines to shrink or kill the cancer cells. Sometimes both oral (tablets) and intravenous medicines (through a drip) are used in combination.

Radiation

When radiation therapy is used

Radiation is often used in combination with surgery to treat cancer. Radiation can be given before surgery to shrink a tumour, and this may enable doctors to get all the cancer tissue out more easily. Radiation can also be given after surgery to lower the chances of any remaining cancer cells growing back again. In some cases, radiation is used with chemotherapy.

The radiation can be given before, during or after chemotherapy. Combination therapy must be used carefully to suit your unique needs – according to the type of cancer, where it is, and what stage it's at.

Where a cure isn't a realistic option anymore, radiation is often used to shrink growths, which relieves pressure and pain. This treatment is known as palliation (symptom relief). Most cancer patients find they have a better quality of life after radiation for symptoms that were painful.

Planning your radiation treatment

A radiotherapist or radiation oncologist (cancer specialist) will use special equipment to define the area and plan your treatment accordingly. Depending on where your cancer is, single or multiple areas may be targeted. With this information, your doctor will consider the radiation combinations and choices to work out the best treatment plan for you.

Before your first treatment another set of special images will be taken. This is to double-check that the radiation will be targeting the right area – and it makes a record of your treatment. These images may be done several times over the course of your radiotherapy to check your progress. It's very important to target the same place with radiation every time, so you will need to sit or lie in exactly the same position each time. A small tattoo of dots may be put on your skin to show the area to be treated, and non-permanent pen marks can also make it easier to set-up correctly for each session.

About how radiotherapy is given

Radiation can be given either externally or internally. The treatment you have depends on the type and stage of your cancer, as well as the location of the tumour.

Most people who receive radiation therapy for cancer have external beam radiation. The beams come from a machine called a linear accelerator. The machine is used by directing high energy beams at the cancer, thereby, treating the affected area and a little bit of the healthy tissue around the edges.

When internal radiation therapy is used, radioactive material is placed inside the body. This is called brachytherapy. Some patients have both forms of radiation, others have one or the other.

How long radiation treatment lasts

Radiation is usually given once a day, for between one and eight weeks. Each treatment takes five to ten minutes and is painless; it feels a little like having an X-ray. The number of days your treatment lasts for depends on the type of cancer and where it is.

Most cancers are treated with radiotherapy for five days a week over six to seven weeks. (When radiation is given to control symptoms only, shorter treatments are used, these could be done for a few days up to three weeks). The whole session, including getting into the right position and setting up, doesn't usually take more than 20 minutes. Smaller daily doses of radiation over a longer period of time, (instead of a few large doses in a shorter time), help to protect normal tissues in the treatment area. Being able to rest over weekends also helps the normal cells to recover from radiotherapy.

This is what happens during radiation treatment

The radiotherapist will use the marks on your skin to position you correctly, and you will be asked to lie very still. Although you'll be alone in the room during treatment, you are always being monitored through a camera system. There is also an intercom, and if you feel ill or very uncomfortable during treatment, tell your therapist straight away. The machine can be stopped at any time and restarted again without any problem.

External beam radiation is painless, and you won't see, feel or smell the radiation. You might hear a sound while the machine is running, but don't worry, this is normal. The radiation will not make you (or anyone you touch) radioactive. There is no need to avoid being with other people because you are having radiation treatment. Even hugging, kissing, or having sex, poses no risk of radiation exposure.

If you're receiving brachy-therapy for prostate cancer it's best to not let people sit on your lap.

After starting treatment, your doctor will see you at least once a week to monitor your progress as well as any reactions to treatment. To make things easier for you, wear loose-fitting comfortable clothes that are easy to take off and put on again.

Side effects of radiation

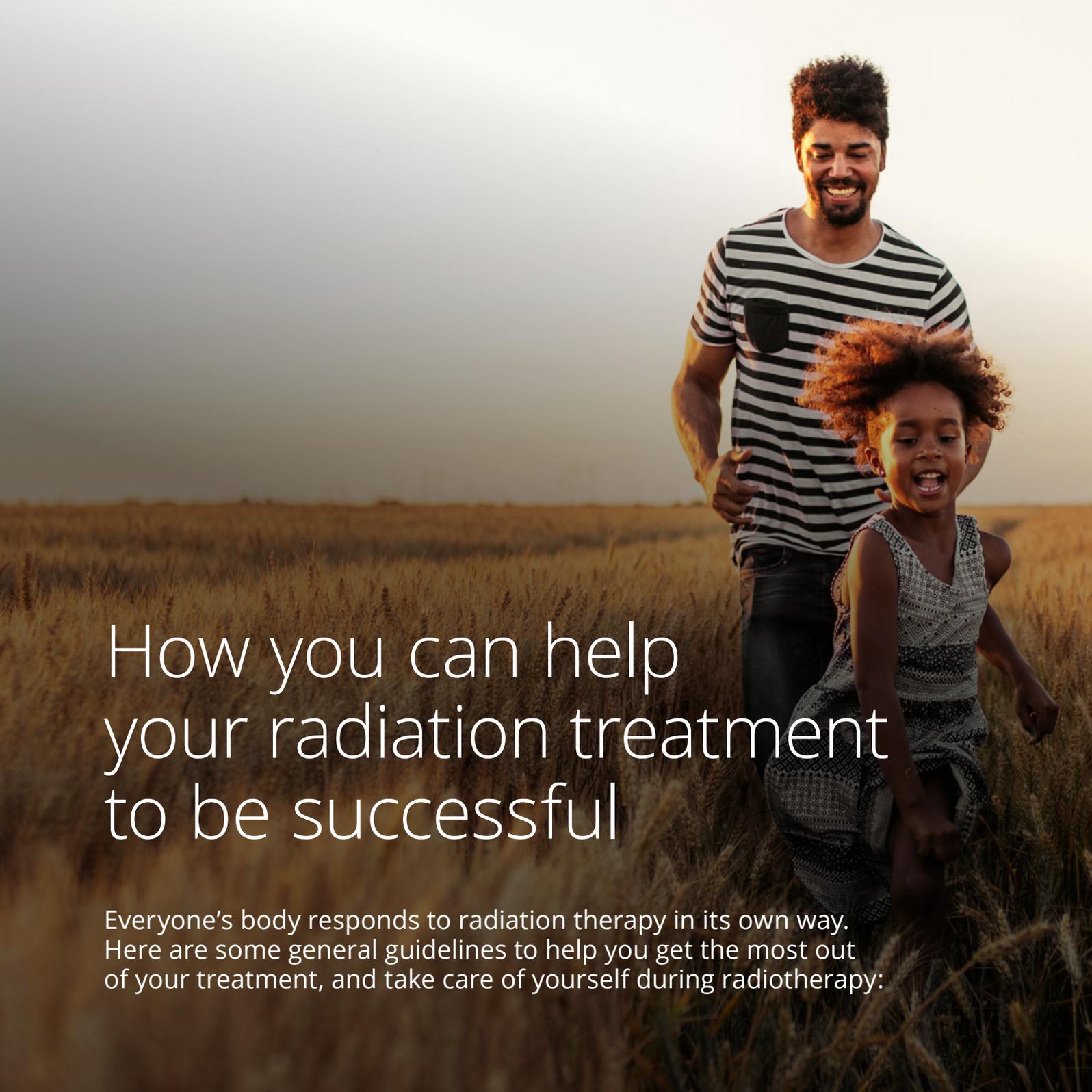
The side effects of radiation are minor for most people and depend on the area that is being treated, the amount of radiation given, and for how long.

Not everyone has side effects – but you don't have to have side effects to show that the treatment is working.

The majority of side effects are harmless, though some might be unpleasant.

- You might have nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and difficulty in urinating if the stomach or pelvis is being targeted. Hair in the targeted area may also fall out. Radiation of the chest may cause a shortness of breath and a sore, dry throat that makes swallowing painful.
- Treatment of the head and neck can cause hair loss, which is temporary, unless high doses of radiation are given. You could also get sores in the mouth, headaches, loss of appetite and changes in taste.

Generally, most people receiving radiation complain of a feeling of tiredness and dry or tender skin during radiation. The good news is that side effects usually go away a few weeks after treatment ends, but it's important to talk to your doctor about any problems you have.

A man with a beard and curly hair, wearing a black and white striped t-shirt, is running through a field of tall grass. He is smiling and looking down at a young girl with curly hair who is running alongside him. The girl is wearing a patterned sleeveless top and is also smiling. The background is a bright, hazy sky, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is joyful and hopeful.

How you can help your radiation treatment to be successful

Everyone's body responds to radiation therapy in its own way. Here are some general guidelines to help you get the most out of your treatment, and take care of yourself during radiotherapy:

01



Get plenty of rest and sleep

Extreme tiredness and exhaustion is common during radiation treatment. Your body will use a lot of extra energy during your treatment, and you may feel very tired. You can expect to feel like this for four to six weeks after your treatment has ended.

02



Eat a balanced diet and prevent weight loss

Before starting treatment, make sure your doctor knows about any medicine you are taking and if you have any allergies. Also check with your doctor before you take vitamin supplements or herbal remedies.

03



Don't wear tight-fitting clothes

This can irritate the skin in the treatment area. Choose soft, loose-fitting cotton garments.

04



Do not use any beauty products without speaking to your doctor first

Also, try not to scratch, rub, shave or scrub sensitive treated areas, or use any sticky tape or plasters.

05



Always protect your skin from the sun

Cover your skin completely and stay out of the sun.

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy refers to medicines or drugs used to destroy cancer cells. People often refer to chemotherapy as 'chemo'.

How chemotherapy is given

There are many different ways to receive chemotherapy. These include:

- 01** | Tablets that are swallowed.
- 02** | An injection in the muscles. of the buttocks or upper arm.
- 03** | An injection into a body cavity, for example the bladder.
- 04** | A drip into the veins over a period of time, from a few minutes to a few hours.
- 05** | **A port:** if you need chemotherapy often, a device or appliance is installed beneath the skin connecting a catheter to the vein. This saves you having to have repeated injections.
- 06** | **By lumbar puncture:** where chemotherapy is injected into the fluid of the spine (intrathecal).

The way you are given your chemotherapy will depend on the type of cancer and medicine your doctor recommends. More than one type of medicine can be used at the same time – your doctor will prescribe the right combination, called a regimen.

How often chemotherapy is given

Mostly chemotherapy is done once or twice a month. However, sometimes it may be given daily or weekly. This can vary, depending on the medicines used and how your body responds.

Is chemotherapy painful?

Some chemotherapy medicines can cause a burning or an itchy feeling at the injection site. If you have any pain during treatment, you should mention this to medical staff immediately, so that your doctor can be aware of this.

Side effects of chemotherapy

Unfortunately, chemotherapy attacks not only the fast-growing cancer cells but also normal cells that grow at a similar rate. As some of the healthy cells are destroyed, the body can respond in a negative way, with side effects. Not everybody has the same degree or kind of side effects – they vary with the type and strength of the medicines used and your reaction to them.

Many people manage to carry on leading a normal life during treatment. There is no reason to stop going out or visiting friends. But, because avoiding infection is important while on chemotherapy, you should stay away from people who you know are ill.

Most side effects disappear once the treatment stops and the healthy cells have a chance to grow normally.

Here are some of the most common side effects, and some ideas on how to manage them

Hair loss

Chemotherapy doesn't always cause hair loss. Even if you do lose all your hair, it will be temporary and usually your hair will grow back once treatment stops. You may also lose your eyelashes, eyebrows, chest hair, underarm hair, leg hair and pubic hair.



When I lost my hair I decided to cut it short before it fell out. When it did, and I had to wear a wig, it was quite an adjustment initially, but I found a style I love, and I will probably keep the cute bob when my own hair grows back. For now, I never have a bad hair day!

Some people find losing their hair difficult to accept and may take some emotional adjustment. If you have long hair it may make things easier if you cut it short before your treatment starts. This allows you time to adjust before your hair loss begins.

When your hair does grow back, it may be a different texture and colour.

What you can do to make things easier

- Consult your hairstylist or visit a wig shop.
- Check to see if your cancer centre has a wig bank.
- Consider a short haircut before hair loss begins.
- Treat yourself to some new hats and colourful scarves.
- Protect yourself from exposure to the sun and cold.
- **Remember:** your hair will most likely grow back!

Emotional distress

You may feel overwhelmed by all that's happening to your body at this time. Emotional stress is just as important as the other physical side effects of cancer treatment. Don't ignore it. Look out for feelings of anxiety, depression, mood swings, irritability, sleep disturbances, fear, isolation, denial, and hopelessness, and seek support when you need it. More information on the emotional impact of cancer is available under the section: The emotional impact of cancer on page 69.

What you can do to make things easier

- Be aware of your feelings and acknowledge them.
 - Express your emotions – don't keep them to yourself.
 - Know that it's OK to feel emotional. Give your feelings space to erupt then find ways to carry on.
 - You might find writing your feelings down in a journal, or doing something creative like drawing or painting a useful way to deal with your emotions.
 - Find a support group where you can discuss your feelings with other people in a similar situation. You can find a list of cancer support groups in the directory section at the back.
 - Accept the love and support of your family and friends who can (and want to) support you during this time.
 - Don't be shy to talk to a professional counsellor or therapist who will help you manage the emotional aspects of dealing with cancer and the treatment.
 - Talk to your cancer specialist – he or she can prescribe treatment to help you manage your emotional stress.
-



CONQUER

The power of imagination makes us infinite.

~ Romtam Kwangsawiwat



Depression

Your medical scheme may cover treatment of depression from your Oncology Benefit. Discuss this with your treating cancer specialist so they can apply.

Fatigue

Your body is working hard and using lots of energy not only to keep you going while fighting cancer, but also to recover from treatment. Remember this and go easy on yourself.

What you can do to make things easier

See a professional counsellor to help you work through your concerns and feelings.

What you can do to make things easier

- Save energy by asking friends and family for help, and taking short naps.
- Don't try to do everything at once – be realistic when planning your daily errands and activities.
- Remember that there will be times that you feel bad, like after treatment. Try to plan anything for when you know you can do it, otherwise you might feel pressurised, guilty or anxious.
- Try to do some exercise – develop a simple exercise plan and go for a daily walk.
- Cut back on caffeine in your drinks, especially in the evening.
- Drink at least four to six glasses of water every day.
- Eat a well-balanced diet, even when you may not feel like eating.
- Let your cancer specialist or the chemo nurse know how you're feeling.

Pain

Having cancer doesn't mean that you need to be burdened by pain. Pain can affect your quality of life, your attitude and your relationships. If you feel any pain from your cancer or cancer treatment at any stage, ask for help straight away.

Remember that pain can be caused by many different things, it does not mean that the cancer has advanced.

Low platelet count (thrombocytopenia)

Platelets help your blood to clot. A low platelet count means your body can't stop itself from bleeding. This means you're likely to bruise or bleed more easily.

What you can do to make things easier

- Ask your cancer specialist for medicine to relieve pain. Treating it will help you feel stronger and better able to cope. Take your medicine at the prescribed times and don't wait for the pain to become intense.
- Speak to your counsellor about alternative methods of coping like relaxation, massage and visualisation. These can help to reduce and control pain, lower anxiety and help you to sleep.
- More information about these techniques is available under the section: The emotional impact of cancer.

What you can do to make things easier

Avoid activities that could cause injury. Take special care when working with sharp tools and knives.

Low red blood cell count (anaemia)

Anaemia happens when the number of red blood cells falls below normal levels because of chemotherapy or radiotherapy. Red blood cells are important because they carry oxygen to the body's cells. Anaemia can cause tiredness, dizziness and shortness of breath, a lack of concentration, and a pale complexion.

Your medical scheme may pay for treatment of anaemia. Your cancer specialist can apply using an oncology treatment application form and sending your test results that confirm the diagnosis of drug-induced anaemia.

What you can do to make things easier

- Ask your cancer specialist or nurse about ways to boost your red blood cells (red blood cell growth factors).
- Rest as much as you need to.
- Decide what activities and tasks are the most important and do these first, then let someone help you with the rest or leave them for another day.
- Eat a well-balanced diet, even when you may not feel like eating.
- Get up slowly when you wake up to avoid feeling dizzy.

Nausea and vomiting

It's very important to prevent and control nausea and vomiting when you're receiving chemotherapy for cancer.

Uncontrolled nausea and vomiting may interfere with your treatment (you may not be well enough to receive your treatment) and it may cause other problems like loss of appetite, associated physical and mental difficulties.

What you can do to make things easier

- Don't eat for a few hours before your chemotherapy treatment.
 - Eat a number of small meals throughout the day rather than three big ones.
 - Avoid hot or spicy foods.
 - Avoid strong smells.
 - Drink plenty of water.
 - Try some relaxation techniques (see the section: The emotional impact of cancer on page 69).
 - Ask your cancer specialist about medicine to help you reduce nausea.
 - Let your specialist or chemo nurse know if you still have nausea while you are receiving treatment for nausea and vomiting, as they may need to adjust your treatment. Discuss with other patients what works for them.
-

I am fundamentally an optimist. Whether that comes from nature or nurture, I cannot say. Part of being optimistic is keeping one's head pointed toward the sun, one's feet moving forward. There were many dark moments when my faith in humanity was sorely tested, but I would not and could not give myself up to despair. That way lays defeat.

~ *Nelson Mandela*



Low white blood cell count (leukopenia)

People who have chemotherapy treatment may be at higher risk than other people of developing an infection. This is because chemotherapy suppresses your immune system as it reduces the number of white blood cells in your blood. White blood cells act like soldiers to defend you from germs that cause infection.

Before each treatment your white cell count will be checked, if your count is too low your chemotherapy treatment may be postponed until it rises again. Your risk of infection may be even higher if:

- You already have a low white blood cell count, or have had chemo or radiation before
- You are older than 65 years
- You have other conditions that lower your immunity, like HIV and AIDS.

Look out for these symptoms of infection:

- Fever and chills (feeling hot and cold)
- Sore throat, cough, short of breath, chest pain
- Pain or burning when you go to the toilet
- Sore teeth or gums, difficulty chewing, or sores in the mouth
- Red or tender or weeping wound sites
- Diarrhoea
- Pain, redness or heat around the catheter entry point.

Please note that these symptoms are not necessarily related to your cancer and could be as a result of another condition.

What you can do to make things easier

It's best to keep away from ill people who are infectious while you're having treatment. Your body can't fight infection as well as it usually can.

Boost your immune system with a healthy balanced diet that includes plenty of vitamin-rich vegetables and fruit.

Sore muscles

Some people get muscle soreness, as well as a burning sensation of pins and needles in their hands and feet.

Weight gain and weight loss

Weight changes may result from certain medicines. Some medicines cause the body to retain too much fluid, resulting in swollen hands, feet, face and abdomen. This is called oedema. Weight loss can happen if you're not eating because of nausea and vomiting. It's very important to control nausea and vomiting as not only can this interfere with your treatments, it can weaken your body.

What you can do to make things easier

Take precautions to prevent injuries and avoid handling hot things while receiving chemotherapy.

What you can do to make things easier

- Eat a balanced diet.
- Include physical activity in every day.
- Speak to your cancer specialist or chemo nurse about medicine to treat your nausea and also on tips to avoid nausea.
- Don't eat for a few hours before your chemo treatment.
- Eat a few small meals through the day rather than three big meals.
- Avoid hot or spicy foods.
- Avoid strong smells.
- Drink plenty of water.





Knowledge really is power. I worked in partnership with my team of doctors towards my survival. I feel blessed to live in a time where there are treatments that can help me live.

Sexual dysfunction and infertility

Chemotherapy may affect the sexual organs and sexual function in both men and women. Discuss these issues with your cancer specialist.

Fear about your cancer can also affect your relationship – both you and your partner have fears. Your fears need to be discussed openly with your partner, to understand what each of you is feeling.

These fears may be about being rejected, having less or no libido, being unattractive, or becoming sterile. While it may be possible to become pregnant during treatment, it is not recommended, as some of the medicine can cause birth defects.

You should also not breastfeed while having chemotherapy, as the chemotherapy medicines will be passed on to your baby through the milk.

What you can do to make things easier

If you are concerned about the possibility of becoming pregnant or fathering a child in the future, discuss this with your medical team. Don't say no to treatment because you fear it, or based on the experiences of friends or family. Everybody reacts differently and although the side effects of treatment may be unpleasant, it can be very effective in destroying cancer.

Your cancer journey is a very personal one – take time to acknowledge your feelings and find ways to be kind to yourself.

Getting the most out of your visits to your treating specialist

Communicate with your healthcare team.

Your doctors and nurses know a lot about your condition, but you know a lot about your own body. Share your fears and concerns, and feel free to always ask questions or have something explained again.

Consider bringing along a family member or friend. Having support is not only comforting, it may help you make better choices when you meet with your doctor or nurse.

Listen carefully. Take notes when your doctor or nurse explains something, or ask your companion to do so. You might want to bring along a notebook or use the blank pages at the back of this book to help you keep track of important information.

Write down the names of your healthcare team and office staff. Your care team may include the following specialists:

- **Medical oncologists:** who specialise in administering anti-cancer medicines (chemotherapy).
- **Surgeons:** who perform various surgical procedures.
- **Radiation oncologists:** who use radiation and/or chemotherapy to treat cancer.
- **Other specialists** such as pathologists, radiologists, nurses, nutritionists, and social workers.
- **Know what medicines you take.** Make a list of all medicines you take and any allergies you have (you can record this information on the pages provided at the back of this book). Update this list often and carry it with you to share with your healthcare team.
- **Try to be on time for appointments.** Plan enough time for traffic delays and parking, or public transport.
- **Be an active member of your healthcare team.** Take part in your treatment choices and be involved in the process.

About what happens after treatment

Follow-up cancer care involves regular medical check-ups that include a review of your medical history and a physical examination. All cancer survivors should have follow-up care.

It's important to check for any changes in health, especially recurrence (cancer returning in the site it was first found) or metastasis (when cancer spreads to other parts of the body).

Follow-up care may include imaging procedures (X-rays, CT scans, MRI scans or other specialised imaging), blood tests, and other laboratory tests. What you do at your appointments and how often you go depends on your personal circumstances.

Follow-up care is different for everyone and depends on the type of cancer, the type of treatment given, and your overall health, including possible cancer treatment-related problems.

Regular visits to your doctor are also important to help in prevention or early detection of other types of cancer, to address ongoing problems due to the cancer or treatment, and check for physical and psychological effects that may develop months to years after treatment ends.

These are the things you should talk to your doctor about during each visit

- Any symptoms or pain that worries you
- Any physical problems that interfere with daily life or you find challenging, such as fatigue; difficulty with bladder, bowel, or sexual function; difficulty concentrating; memory changes; trouble sleeping; and weight gain or loss
- Any medicines, vitamins, or herbs you are taking and any other treatments you're using
- Any emotional problems, such as anxiety or depression
- Any changes in your family medical history, including any new cancers.

It is important to note that cancer recurrences are not always detected during follow-up visits. Often, recurrences are suspected or found by patients themselves between scheduled check-ups. You need to know your body and be aware of any changes in your health. Discuss any concerns with your doctor right away.

Never let the odds keep
you from doing what you
know in your heart you
were meant to do.

~ H. Jackson Brown Jr





02

Healthy choices
to support healing

Healthy choices to support healing

Many cancer survivors say that a loss of control was one of the most difficult aspects of dealing with cancer. Research shows that people who take steps towards goals that they have chosen themselves generally feel better and do better than those who feel they have no control over their situation. Knowledge is critical in understanding and fighting cancer.

Good food, exercise and managing stress are some of the most important gifts you can give yourself at this time. Here you'll find information that helps you take control of how you live your life – and helps you make healthy lifestyle choices.

Nutrition and cancer

Good eating habits help in fighting disease and contribute to a healthy lifestyle. A good diet is especially important during illness as you need nutrients to fight disease and replenish the body after treatment to help the body heal.

Here are some general guidelines to help your body function at its best at all stages.

A well-balanced eating plan

A balanced diet provides all the protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals, fibre and water that your body needs to function properly. Each of these nutrients has an important job to do.

If you have too little of any one of them, your body may not be able to protect, repair, rejuvenate and cleanse itself. This can leave you prone to disease, infection and low energy levels.

Tip

Think of your cancer treatment as a time to get well and focus just on yourself. Eat a healthy diet before treatment starts. This helps you stay strong during treatment and lowers your risk of infection.

Protein

Proteins are the building blocks of the body. Without a good supply the body is unable to function, repair or replace damaged tissue properly.

Good sources of protein are: fish, dry beans, peas, lentils, eggs, soya, lean chicken and beef. Try to eat two servings of protein a day, but limit those with a lot of animal fat, like polony, sausages and full-cream dairy.

Tip

Eat plenty of protein and get in good quality kilojoules when you can. This helps you keep strong and rebuild tissues harmed by cancer treatment.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are the best source of energy for the body. There are two types of carbohydrates: fast-releasing, such as sugar, honey, sweets, bread and mielie meal; and slow-releasing, such as vegetables, wholegrains, brown rice, oats, dry beans, lentils, dry peas and fresh fruit. For stable energy levels all day, have less fast-releasing carbohydrates, and more of the slow-releasing type.

Mielie meal should be eaten in small portions, with protein to slow down digestion. Have three to five portions of vegetables a day and two to four servings of fruit. It is best to eat fruit and vegetables as fresh and as raw as possible as they contain nutrients that play an important role in keeping cells healthy and can protect against cancer development.

Fibre

Fibre is good for digestion as it cleans out the bowel and removes waste. Wholegrains, vegetables, samp mielie, mielie rice, fruits, nuts, seeds, lentils, beans and high-fibre cereal are all good sources of fibre and should be eaten daily to keep you regular. If you don't get enough fibre, the bowel slows down and you may become constipated.

Vitamins and minerals

Vitamins and minerals are vital for the body to work well. They protect cells, keep the nervous system healthy, and boost the immune system. They also convert food into energy, keep bones and teeth strong, and help with healing. Good sources of vitamins are nuts, fruits, vegetables, seeds, dry beans and wholegrains.

Fats

Not all fats are bad for you. There are some that are necessary for your body to work properly. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are needed by your skin, nervous system, immune system and circulatory system. They are also necessary to keep your cell membranes healthy. Good sources are nuts, avocados, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds, olives, olive and sunflower oil and fish, like pilchards and sardines.

There are two types of fats to stay away from: saturated fat and trans fatty acids. Avoid deep-fried foods, chicken skin, full-fat dairy products and cheeses, fast foods and fatty bakery items, as well as chocolates and chips – these are full of saturated fats. They can be bad for circulation and lower the oxygen levels in your cells.

Trans fats are fats that have been processed and damaged by heat. They are hidden in many foods and make it hard for your cells to absorb nutrients. Foods to avoid are hard margarine, fried foods, biscuits, croissants, chips, cakes, pancake mixes, doughnuts, and pastries. Check food label for the words “hydrogenated” fats – these are trans fats and should be avoided.

Water

Each day you lose between one and two litres of water through the skin, bowels, lungs and urine as your body gets rid of wastes. It is important that you replace this water and keep your body hydrated, so drink water throughout the day, and eat fruit and vegetables to replace fluids.

Keep a check on how much tea (except rooibos), coffee and alcohol you drink as these drinks dehydrate you.

Tip

Healthy eating habits can be difficult to keep up when you have cancer, with the side effects of treatment, anxiety, and the changes that cancer causes. At times you'll need to be gentle with yourself, and just eat whatever you can. Try again to use these guidelines when you're up to it.

Also: Plan menus in advance, use time-savers like good quality ready-made meals, keep foods that don't need much preparation handy, and take advantage of the times that you are feeling well, to eat.

Nutritional needs specific to the phase of your cancer survival

In addition to these guidelines for healthy living, you may have different nutritional needs at different phases of cancer survival. These phases include active treatment phase, recovery phase, a phase to prevent cancer recurrence, and, for some, a phase of living with advanced cancer.

Here are some things to consider at different phases of your cancer journey

Phase I: Cancer treatment

Having treatment for cancer may interfere with your ability to eat, digest, or absorb food because of side effects such as nausea, vomiting, changes in taste or smell, loss of appetite, or bowel changes. When this happens, your usual food choices and eating patterns may need to be changed a little. For example, five small meals during the day may be easier to keep down than three large meals.

Choose foods that are easy to chew, swallow, digest, and absorb, and that are appealing, even if they are also a little higher in kilojoules or fat than you normally have.

It's important to keep your weight stable by eating proteins, carbohydrates and fats. Lots of people lose their appetite during and after treatment, and you'll need to be careful not to lose too much weight.

To make soft foods

Chop up fish, eggs, chicken and well-cooked vegetables and mix with gravy or stock. Make sure the food is very soft and chew it well before swallowing. (Baby foods are useful as they are soft, come in small portions and don't need any preparation.)

Here are some ways to perk up your appetite when it's low, and to make the most of it when you do feel like eating

- Eat when you're hungry, even if it's not time for a meal.
- Eat several small meals during the day rather than three large ones.
- Eat when you feel best.
- Keep simple meals in the fridge for when you get hungry, and keep healthy snacks close by for nibbling on.
- If other people offer to cook for you let them and don't be shy to tell them what you'd like to eat.
- If you can only eat small amounts of food, increase the nutrition you're getting by:
 - Adding margarine
 - Mixing canned cream soups with milk rather than water
 - Drinking milkshakes
 - Adding cream sauce or melted cheese to your favourite vegetables
 - Some people find they can drink a lot of liquids even when they don't feel like eating solid foods. If this is true for you, get the most from each glassful by making drinks enriched with powdered milk, yoghurt, honey, or prepared liquid supplements.
- Eat your favourite foods; if familiar foods no longer taste good, try new foods and new ways of preparing them.

Phase 2:
Recovery from treatment

After your treatment has ended, your goal should be to help your body rebuild muscle strength, and re-set your body to normal if you've had problems like anaemia (low red blood cell count). During this phase, you need a nutritionally balanced diet with a healthy number of kilojoules and enough variety to make sure you're getting all the nutrients, vitamins and minerals you need.

Phase 3:

Preventing cancer recurrence

During this phase, continue eating balanced meals, with a wide variety of foods, especially colourful fruits and vegetables, which contain many important nutrients.

Phase 4:

Living with advanced cancer

Nutrition is an important factor for sense of wellbeing and quality of life for people with advanced cancer. You might also need to manage side effects like constipation, and a loss of appetite. Physical activity can help boost appetite, and if you're still not able to take in enough kilojoules, your healthcare team can help you supplement your meals.

Easy-on-the-stomach options

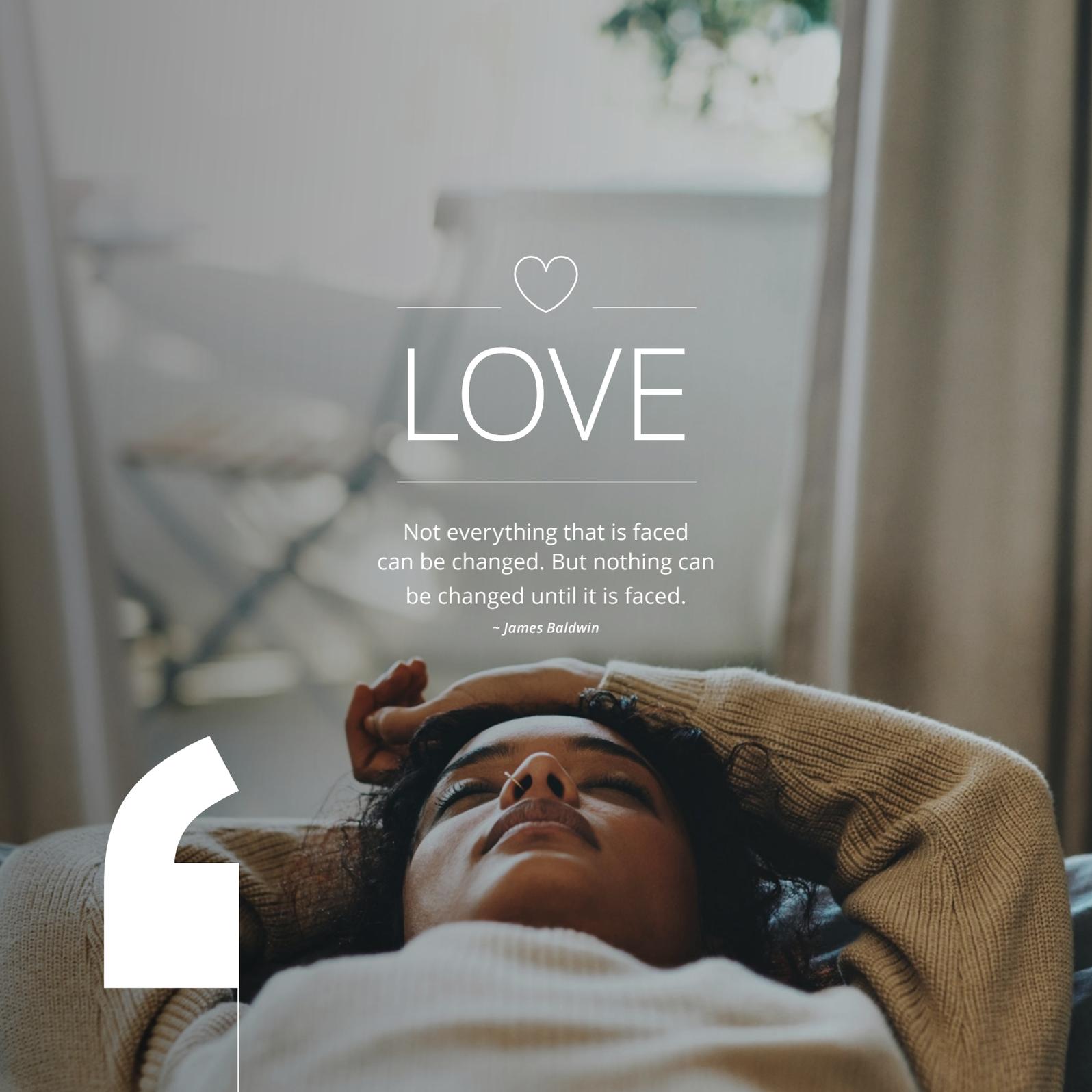
- Clear chicken/vegetable soup
- Cranberry/grape juice
- Sports drinks
- Avocado
- Beef tender cuts
- Cottage cheese
- Noodles
- Peanut butter
- Potatoes
- Bananas
- Frozen yoghurt
- Liquid meal replacements
- Milkshakes



LOVE

Not everything that is faced
can be changed. But nothing can
be changed until it is faced.

~ James Baldwin



Food for thought

There are some specific food-related issues for people living with cancer to think about.

Food hygiene is of special concern for people with cancer, especially during times when your immune system is low. During any cancer treatment, you should be very careful not to eat foods that may have a lot of micro-organisms in them.

To make food as safe as possible, always follow these food safety guidelines:

- Wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food, and eating.
- Be extra careful when handling raw meats, fish, chicken and eggs.
- Cook food to the proper temperature (avoid raw and rare foods) and put leftovers in the fridge straight away to prevent bacteria growing. Don't leave any foods standing at room temperature.
- When eating in restaurants, avoid foods that come from salad bars, and anything raw like sushi, shellfish, carpaccio, deli meats, and rare cuts of meat.
- Make sure any water you drink is pure. Boil it first if you aren't sure.

Your body weight

Cancer and its treatment puts your body under strain, and you'll need some extra nutrition to keep up your strength. Many people see changes in their body weight.

Some types of cancer (like breast cancer) mean you might gain weight during and after treatment, but this is not the time to diet. Manage any weight gain with a healthy eating plan, and regular exercise. (And don't forget that the weight gain will pass, you are likely to return to your normal weight once treatment stops.)

Alcohol

Alcohol and cigarette smoking greatly increases the risk of developing cancer and can hamper the healing process.

Alcohol should be avoided altogether or limited while you're having cancer treatment, especially if you're having radiotherapy to the head and neck.

Chemotherapy can also make your mouth and throat sensitive and alcohol may irritate these areas. Some chemotherapy medicines may be damaging to your liver and alcohol can make this worse.

Fruit and vegetables

A diet including lots of fruits and vegetables can help boost immunity and improve cancer survival. Try to eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables – fresh, canned, frozen, or juiced – each day. One serving is about half a cup of cooked vegetables or chopped fruit, a quarter cup of dried fruit, one piece of fresh fruit, or one cup of raw green leafy vegetables. Vegetables and fruit are low in fat, contribute fibre and micronutrients, and are generally healthier than many other food choices. They are great for snacking on too when you're feeling nauseous as they don't have strong smells and are generally sweet and can be packed in your bag.

Tips

Often friends and family want to help, but they don't know what to do. Asking them to do the shopping and cooking not only gives you a break, but gives them a chance to show their support.

Vitamin and mineral supplements

The best source of vitamins and minerals is food. But, if your illness or treatment means you can't eat healthily, supplements may be recommended. You will need to be very careful about taking dietary supplements as some affect cancer treatment.

Some should not be used at all, such as folic acid, as it can make chemotherapy less effective. High doses of antioxidants may also interfere with radiotherapy and some chemotherapy medicines.

Only take what your doctor prescribes. After treatment a multivitamin will be helpful to replace any missing nutrients.

Natural remedies

Fresh garlic is a natural antibiotic that helps fight bacterial and viral infections. Peel a small clove of garlic and swallow it whole to avoid the unpleasant taste or add it to soups and stews.

What to do if you have a sore mouth

When your throat and mouth are sore, try soft foods like yoghurt, oats and stews. Sauces and gravies moisten foods, making them easier to swallow.

Avoid food and drink that is very hot, allow it to cool first. You may try drinking through a straw. Also, avoid rough or dry foods, like rusks, toast, biscuits or raw vegetables.

Acidic foods like pineapple, citrus and tomatoes, may be painful to eat or worsen the problem so keep away from these.

Keep your mouth as healthy as possible by brushing your teeth after each meal with a soft toothbrush (try a children's one). You might want to try a mouth wash, ask your doctor to prescribe one that is not too strong for you.

If you wear dentures, soak them overnight in a cleansing solution. Cancer treatment may cause your tongue to be coated. Use a solution of one teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda dissolved in half a litre of water to clean.

A good meal replacement supplement can also be helpful to deal with a sore mouth.



One thing I learned on my journey was compassion for myself – I am much kinder to myself now, and I allow myself to do silly things if I feel like it, like sing along to loud music in my car, even though I am totally tone deaf! I adopted a dog from a rescue centre and she brings such joy. You have to have some fun!

Dealing with nausea and vomiting

Nausea and vomiting are common side effects of cancer and treatment.

They can prevent you from getting the vital nutrients you need. Bland foods (bread, plain yoghurt, steamed skinless chicken, clear soups) are easier to tolerate when you are feeling nauseous. Greasy, fatty, fried, spicy or very sweet foods may make you feel worse.

Try these ideas to manage nausea

- Let someone else prepare your meals – keep away from the smell of cooking.
- Take a short walk before each meal to stimulate your appetite.
- Eat in a room with good air supply.
- If you feel sick when you wake up, try and eat something dry, such as toast, preferably before you get up.
- Do not drink with your meal. Wait half an hour after meals before having a drink.
- Eat small meals during the day. Eat and drink slowly to give your stomach time to adjust.
- Cold foods and drinks are better for you when you are feeling nauseous than hot or warm foods. Sip iced water or suck an ice cube.
- Do not wear tight clothing.
- Avoid lying flat after eating.
- Rest while your meal settles.
- Distract yourself when eating by listening to music, watching TV or chatting to friends.

Relaxation and breathing techniques can help to prevent or control vomiting. Find a quiet area and lie down, relaxing as much as possible. Focus on your breathing and allow it to deepen and slow down until you find a rhythmic pattern that calms you.

Once vomiting is under control sip small amounts of clear liquids. Start with a teaspoonful every 10 minutes and gradually increase. If the vomiting remains under control you can start sipping diluted fruit juices and clear soups to build up your strength. Eventually add soft bland foods such as mashed potato.

Tips

Fresh or powdered ginger is every helpful against nausea. It can be used before or after chemotherapy. Make a refreshing drink by grating a little ginger into water and placing in the fridge, to sip throughout the day. Ginger tea and ginger ale may also be helpful.



Changes in sense of taste/smell

People who have cancer treatment often experience changes in taste and smell. You may have a metallic taste in your mouth and dislike specific foods. If food begins to taste different, here are a few ideas that may help to make it tastier:

- Eat the foods you like as often as possible.
- Try different foods that are new and interesting to taste.
- Enhance flavour by using more and stronger seasonings and herbs like lemon, mint, rosemary, oregano, basil and tarragon.
- Eat foods at room temperature, rather than hot.
- Replace tea and coffee with fruit juices and herbal teas.

Changes in bowel movements

Cancer treatment can cause constipation or diarrhoea. Changing your diet may help and prevent it happening again. But remember to always consult your doctor before taking any medicine as these may interfere with your treatment.

For prevention and relief of constipation, remember to drink plenty of fluids, at least six to eight glasses a day. A warm drink first thing in the morning may help. Try a glass of warm water with a little lemon juice added. Your diet should include foods that are high in fibre, such as dry beans, lentils, fresh vegetables and fruits. A short walk helps the digestive tract to move. Prune juice also helps maintain regularity of the bowel and foods such as dried, stewed fruit, high fibre cereal and paw-paw help keep your digestive tract in good shape.

Changes in bowel movement

Diarrhoea needs to be monitored as it can lead to dehydration and you will not be able to absorb the necessary nutrients from food. You must contact your doctor if your diarrhoea lasts for more than two days.

Eat small frequent meals and drink plenty of fluids. Eat foods and drink liquids that are high in salt and potassium, such as clear soup, bananas, grated apple, marmite and mashed potato. Also avoid milk and dairy products and replace these with soya milk or yoghurt.

Try this remedy for diarrhoea: Boil white rice and drink the water that the rice has cooked in as often as possible. Foods to eat are oats, steamed fish, rice, mashed potato, mashed banana and grated apple.

Don't be influenced by everybody else's advice. People mean well, but remember you are in control. You must decide on your own lifestyle plan. You may not always be able to stick to this plan, but do the best you can, eat and exercise as well as you can, but try not to let your diet become a source of stress.

A natural remedy for constipation

Mix a quarter cup of warm water with a tablespoon of prune juice. Add a few drops of fresh lemon juice. Add three to four teaspoons of canola or olive oil and drink this mixture first thing in the morning and last thing at night.

Exercise

Even though cancer treatment might make you feel tired all the time, remember that light, regular physical activity during treatment will improve your appetite, stimulate digestion, and prevent constipation. Physical activity also boosts energy levels and muscle mass, and help you relax and manage stress. Importantly, activity reduces your risk of certain of cancers and cancer recurring.

Physical activity improves your overall quality of life

- You will feel better and more in control of your body when you exercise regularly.
- Exercise also triggers 'happy hormones', which lift your mood and help you cope.
- Activity combats fatigue, so even if you feel tired to begin with, at the end you will feel more energised.
- Building strength and power helps you feel positive.
- You may also find you sleep better at night when you've exercised.

There are lots of ways you can bring more activity into your day

You can walk your dog, play frisbee with the kids, park further away from the shops and walk the distance, take the stairs instead of the lift, and go to gym.

Whatever you do, find an activity you enjoy and make it a part of your everyday life. Your body, mind and soul will benefit.

Be at least moderately active for 30 minutes or more on most days of the week.

Tips

Make sure you drink plenty of water when you exercise to keep from dehydrating. Take special care too, if you treatment affects your sense of balance.

Try to reach and maintain a healthy weight

The easiest way to check whether you're in a healthy weight range or not, is to work out your body mass index (BMI). Your BMI shows if you are carrying too much weight for your frame.

Calculate your body mass index with these steps

- 01 | Work out your height in metres and multiply the figure by itself.
- 02 | Measure your weight in kilograms.
- 03 | Divide the weight by the height squared.

For example, for a person who is 1.6m tall and weighs 65kg, the calculation would then be:

$$1.6 \times 1.6 = 2.56.$$

Your BMI would be 65 divided by 2.56 = 25.39.

A BMI that falls within the 18.5 – 25 range is considered normal. A BMI of less than 18.5 is considered underweight, while a BMI of 25 – 29.9 is considered overweight. A BMI of 30+ is considered obese.

When calculating your body mass index, it's important to note that the BMI ranges are calculated using averages. If any of the following circumstances apply to you, then your BMI reading may not be a true reflection of your healthy weight range:

- You are younger than 18 years
- You are pregnant or breastfeeding
- You are a competitive athlete or a bodybuilder
- You are elderly.

I was quite inactive before my diagnosis, but I started walking before my chemo because it helped me prepare mentally for treatment. Now my day just isn't complete without my 5km daily fix! I walk to clear my head, energise my body, and challenge myself. I entered my first 10km fun run on the first anniversary of my diagnosis.



The image features a soft, warm-toned background of a sunset or sunrise. A dark silhouette of a person is visible on the left side, walking along a path. The overall scene is out of focus, creating a sense of movement and tranquility.

Walking
is good for
everybody

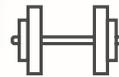
Regular
walking
30 minutes
a day

3^{to}5

times a week
can make
you healthier
and happier



- **Raises immunity**
- **Boosts** endorphins, easing stress, tension, anger and reducing fatigue
- **Improves** heart health by increasing circulation and heart rate
- Improves blood pressure



- **Engages** abdominal muscles
- **Works** arm and shoulder muscles
- **Helps build** muscle and maintain a healthy body weight



- **Builds bone mass** (reducing risk of osteoporosis)
- **Strengthens legs:** quads, hip flexors, hamstrings
- **Improves balance** (preventing falls)

Managing stress

Most people who fight and live with cancer experience some stress. It's a natural reaction to a very challenging situation. Stress can make you feel out of control. High levels of constant stress can affect your health in a bad way because it lowers the immune system's ability to fight illness. Mind and body are connected and just as negative thoughts can adversely affect the immune system, so positive thoughts can benefit you, in your fight against cancer.

There are some techniques you can try to help you relax and find peace of mind

Old habits need to be replaced with new ones and this takes a little time and patience. Don't give up, keep practising these new techniques until they become part of your life. It'll be worth it, a positive and healthy mental state can have a profound impact on your physical wellbeing.

Name your stressors

First you need to identify all the stressful events, thoughts and activities in your life. These may include: fear of dying, financial worries, anxiety about medical procedures, changes in the way you look, not being able to work, changes in relationships, and loss of independence.

Notice how you react

How do you respond to those things that make you stressed?

Notice if you become irritated, angry, and tearful, can't sleep, breath fast and shallow, can't eat or eat too much.

Work out the stressors that are within your control and those you have no control over. Don't waste time and energy worrying about things that you can't change.

Use your energy to change your lifestyle, your thoughts and behaviour so you can manage your stress successfully. Relaxation techniques can reduce your stress symptoms.

How to let stress go

- Choose where and how to spend your time and energy. Take time out when you need it.
- Build up your strength with good nutrition and exercise (if possible).
- **Don't forget your sense of humour:**
 - Learn to laugh and let yourself see the funny side of situations. Laughter is still good medicine. Collect books, people and films that make you feel happy.
- **Create a comfortable environment:**
 - Surround yourself with people and things that you like. Art, music and good books comfort you and feed your soul. Get rid of clutter in your life.
- **Ask for help:**
 - You don't have to do it all on your own so save your energy for important and fun activities by asking others for help.
 - *Learn to say 'No':* Don't take on more than you can handle. You won't have energy for everything, so prioritise what you need and can do and say 'No' to the rest.

Why relaxation is so important

Relaxation helps reduce anxiety, making it easier to cope with pain and the side effects of treatment. Relaxation techniques help the body by lowering or slowing heart rate, blood pressure, and breathing. This results in a warm and comfortable feeling, often described as tranquil – yet alert.

Hormones, enzymes and our body's natural painkillers are released when the body is in a state of relaxation. This boosts the immune system and creates a feeling of wellbeing. Research has found that relaxation reduces tension, anxiety and depression in patients facing chemotherapy and radiation. It can also relieve unpleasant side effects like nausea, pain and vomiting.

Relaxation techniques

Try some of these strategies to help you cope:

Distraction: Watch television or movies, listen to the radio, read books or magazines, do needlework or puzzles, build models or paint.

Imagery: A way of day-dreaming using all your senses.

Massage therapy: Involves touch and different methods of stroking and kneading the muscles of the body. Use only trained, registered therapists.

Meditation and prayer: Meditation is a relaxation technique that allows you to focus your energy and your thoughts on something very specific (such as breathing).

Yoga: All you need is a quiet, comfortable place and some time each day to practise breathing, stretching and meditation. Many gyms also offer beginners' yoga classes.

Visualisation: Visualisation is a mind-body technique that uses the power of your imagination. Research has shown that your thoughts are able to produce a physical reaction in your body. Through the power of your mind you can create feelings of wellness, healing and balance. For visualisation to work, you should try to do it three times a day for about 15 minutes at a time.

Deep breathing

Anxiety and stress can make us take short, shallow breaths. Shallow breathing, which does not allow enough oxygen to enter our bodies, can make us even more anxious. Try this deep breathing exercise, anywhere, anytime:

- 01 | Take a deep breath from your diaphragm (that muscle between your lungs and abdomen)
- 02 | Hold the breath for a few seconds – however long is comfortable for you
- 03 | Then exhale slowly
- 04 | Repeat steps 1 to 3 twice more
- 05 | Afterwards, relax for a moment and let yourself feel calm.

Try visualisation

In this relaxation technique, you form mental images to take a visual journey to a peaceful, calming place or situation. It can be a real place you know and love, or an imaginary place. As you form the pictures in your mind, imagine the detail, and try to use as many senses as you can, including smell, sight, sound and touch. If you imagine relaxing by the sea, for example, think about how the salt water tastes, what you can smell, the sound of crashing waves and the warmth of the sun on your body. Find a quiet place, loosen any tight clothing, and close your eyes.

You can get guided visualisation CDs or download one from the CANSA website: www.cansa.org.za

As a survivor of adolescent cancer, I see now that getting ill made me face the possibility of mortality and that in turn gave me an early maturity and understanding of the importance of family, friends and hope.





POSITIVE

Positive thoughts can benefit you in your fight against cancer: your mental state can have a profound impact on your physical wellbeing.



Lifestyle facts and myths

Cancer is a very complex disease. No one knows everything about cancer, and although the Internet is full of information, not all of it comes from a credible source. Your doctor is the best source of medical information.

Here are some of the incorrect statements you may have heard:

MYTH: Unhealthy people are more inclined to get cancer

FACT: There is no correlation between a person's general state of health and the development of cancer.

MYTH: Some people have a 'cancer' personality

FACT: Researchers have been trying for years to identify specific personality traits that may play a role in the development of cancer, but they have not been able to.

According to some theories, a 'cancer personality' is a person who often compromises and hardly ever complains. Others say it's someone who carries grudges and can't forgive and forget; who is self-pitying; doesn't have long-term relationships and has a poor self-image. Doctors who work with cancer patients every day say these theories are completely untrue.

MYTH: Good people do not get cancer

FACT: People do not get cancer based on their thoughts or general behaviour. This belief dates back to ancient times when illness was viewed as a punishment for bad thoughts or deeds. In some cultures, that view is still held.

MYTH: Cancer is contagious and can be caught by kissing or having sex with a cancer patient

FACT: Cancer is not contagious. People who care for cancer patients every day do not get cancer more often than others. Do not avoid someone who has cancer – your support may never be more valuable.

MYTH: Haemorrhoids (piles) can become cancerous

FACT: This is false. But haemorrhoids may co-exist with cancer. You should mention any rectal bleeding to a doctor. Do not assume that all bleeding is caused by haemorrhoids. One of the symptoms of cancer of the colon or rectum, is bright red blood in the stools.

MYTH: Stomach ulcers mean cancer

FACT: For a long time it was believed that stomach ulcers could result in stomach cancer. However, the danger of stomach ulcers is not so much the possibility that they may result in cancer, but rather that stomach cancer may be wrongly diagnosed and treated as an ulcer.

MYTH: Using tampons can cause cancer

FACT: It has been suggested that tampons contain chemicals (asbestos and dioxin) that are known to cause cancer. These claims are totally untrue.

MYTH: Cellphones can cause cancer

FACT: Over the years, researchers have not been able to find evidence that absolutely links cellphones to cancer. The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) suggests the following:

- Limit the number and duration of cellphone calls.
- Use text messages when possible.
- Switch sides of the head when the call is long.
- Use hands-free kits or speakerphone mode to keep the phone at a distance from the head.
- Instruct children and teenagers to limit calls to emergencies only as they are more vulnerable to electro-magnetic radiation.

It is not the mountain we
conquer but ourselves.

~ *Edmund Hillary*





03

The emotional
impact of cancer

The emotional impact of cancer

Cancer is a life-changing event, not only for you, but for all those close to you.

It's important to take care of your emotional and mental health as well as your physical wellbeing.

It helps to remember that no thoughts or feelings are right or wrong at this time –you're likely to feel many different emotions. Acknowledging them, expecting them, and giving them space to be expressed is the first step to dealing with your feelings in a healthy way.

In this section you'll find information on some of the emotions you can expect and some ideas about how to deal with them constructively so you can progress through them and heal your whole self. Research shows that those who look for support, by themselves or within groups, cope better. A person who takes action will find a sense of control so we've also included a list of support groups. Good food, exercise and managing stress are some of the most important gifts you can give yourself at this time. Here you'll find information that will help you take control of how you live your life – and help you make healthy lifestyle choices.

When you are first diagnosed with cancer you feel a whirlwind of emotions

While your experiences and emotions are unique to you, there is often a common thread in the type of emotions people go through. There is value in experiencing and passing through each one of these emotions, as it shows you are progressing and healing.

But, don't pressurise or rush yourself, feel them and deal with them as and when they come, some might take longer than others to pass.

These are some of the emotions you might feel

Shock and disbelief

Shock and disbelief are often the first emotions people with cancer feel. 'Cancer happens to other people, not me!' Many people see it as a fatal disease, though the illness can be managed and treated. Disbelief about what is happening is understandable and serves a useful purpose: it provides a calming, numbing effect that softens the news of the diagnosis. It acts like a local anaesthetic when you need it most – giving you time to come to terms with the news, and a chance to start adjusting to a major change in your life.

Working through it

When you are in shock you cannot concentrate or take in all the relevant facts and information. Don't overreact but assure yourself of the facts. Let your doctor repeat the information with someone else in the room, so they can remind you what was said later. Give yourself time to adjust to your diagnosis. Shock is natural under these circumstances so don't judge yourself.

A young girl with braids is running through the ocean waves, holding the hand of an adult. She is wearing a blue and white striped long-sleeved shirt and dark shorts. The background shows the ocean with waves breaking. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent grey box on the left side of the image.

Extra information

Dedicated and experienced consultants are available to help you.

Keep these numbers and addresses handy:

- Discovery Health Oncology Programme 0860 100 417
- Preauthorisations email preauthorisations@discovery.co.za
- Oncology preauthorisations email DCO_Oncology@discovery.co.za
- Customer Service Centre 0860 99 88 77
- Oncology preauthorisations fax number 011 539 5417



Denial

Denial is when you can't believe that you have cancer. It's often expressed as: 'No – it can't be true'. Denial acts as a buffer, allowing you time to accept your diagnosis. It can cause withdrawal, isolation and mood swings. Sometimes denial goes on for a long time, but if it goes on for too long, you delay facing up to the reality. And you might postpone treatment, which could affect your future health.

Working through it

Accept that denial is a normal reaction to a cancer diagnosis. Allow yourself the mood fluctuations that swing from hope to despair. It takes time for the reality to sink in. You might not want to tell anyone what is happening because you don't want to believe it yourself – but a lack of communication at this time reinforces your feelings of isolation. It can cause breakdown in family relationships. Try to be open with family and friends, as you'll need their support.

You may be feeling a bit disorientated, as if the world you as you knew it has shifted. This is a phase of adjustment. Instead of seeing it as something you die from, cancer is seen as something you learn to live with. Dealing positively with cancer allows you to live in the present, while still allowing you to make plans for the future.

Guilt

Guilt is an important emotion to deal with. Some people blame themselves for their illness – or blame things they don't have any control over. Sometimes people feel that they have failed somehow. 'What did I do wrong to get sick?' Some may even think they caused their own cancer. Some people even believe that they are being punished for things they have said or done. This isn't true. Cancer can affect anyone, and often the reasons can't be explained.

Having difficulty coping with cancer, the treatment, or side effects is another reason some people feel guilty. Be careful not to make unreasonable demands on yourself. You might feel you're not recovering fast enough, or that you're letting family or your medical team down. Guilt can be a destructive emotion; let go of the feelings that place burdens on you. Think about why you feel guilty, and realise there's nothing you can do about some things. Discuss your feelings with your loved ones or a therapist.

Working through it

In dealing with guilt, look at unresolved issues. Identify the feelings behind the guilt, such as remorse, anger or sadness. When you are feeling guilty, you may actually be feeling regret at not being able to do what you want to. Are you blaming yourself for the impact your cancer is having on your family? You are not to blame. You can lessen the guilt by talking to others – often when you say it out loud, you will be able to see that there is nothing you could have done differently, and so there is nothing to feel guilty about. Sharing these thoughts is a good way to unburden; troubles shared are troubles halved, as they say.

Anger

Hearing you have cancer may result in you saying things like: 'How dare this happen? I won't allow it! It isn't fair! Why now? I don't deserve it'. This anger is a reaction to the unfairness of what has happened to you, the interruption in your life, and the unjust loss of your lifestyle. Anger is often not directed at anyone specific, but sometimes you might feel angry with the cancer, your body, at your god for letting this happen, at the world, at the doctors who told you that you have cancer, at friends who are still healthy or even at loved ones. Sometimes there is no reason for your anger and no one to direct it at.

Anger can mask other feelings, like fear, panic and helplessness. It is easier than admitting that you are having a hard time and that you can't cope. Expressing your anger can actually be healthy because it enables you to act.

Working through it

When handling anger it is important to identify why you are angry. And at what, or whom, and then get it out. Yell, scream, punch pillows to release the anger, but try not to wallow in the feeling, and dwell on it. Use that energy to get well and live positively. Avoid frustrating situations and allow yourself to cry when you need to. Do not mask your true feelings. Find out what is making you angry and clarify your feelings. It's okay to let it out, and then move on.

Fear

Fear is a common emotion associated with illness. You could be fearful of many things, like what lies ahead; this is normal and to be expected. Fear raises questions about your life expectancy. How the illness will impact your career. How you will manage your responsibilities as a wife or husband, a parent, a child or an employee.

Fear is difficult to deal with. Remember the more you know the less you fear. It is natural to be afraid of the unknown. By allowing yourself to be fearful and sharing it with someone, your fears become more manageable.

Many people fear being abandoned. Family and friends may stay away because of their own fears of losing you – so they withdraw to protect themselves. This can leave you feeling alone, which can lead to depression. Another common fear is of disfigurement, or changes to your body. You may no longer feel complete and withdraw from life, resulting in lower self-esteem and confidence. This can also lead to depression. You might also be afraid of pain. Many types of cancer do not cause pain. If you do have pain, it can be sorted out fairly easily. Knowledge and information about the pain that your cancer and side effects may cause will lift this fear. Talk to your medical team.

Even if your prognosis is good, death will now be more real than it ever was before. It is perfectly natural to fear death. Coming face-to-face with your mortality can be frightening. A spiritual belief will give you comfort at this time. Even if you are not religious, you can pray and accept the prayers and thoughts of others.

The fear of losing your independence and having to rely on others is quite normal. It is as if the cancer is in control of your body; and the doctor is in control of your treatment. You feel that you are losing control of your life. Loss of financial independence is another common fear.

Working through it

“Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced,” said author and activist James Baldwin. Facing up to your fears, admitting them, discussing them, lessens the hold that fear has on you. Being informed and in control of the decisions about your treatment, care, and life, will help lessen your fears.

Dependency

It's okay to be dependent on your medical team up to a point, but always keep in mind that you are in control of your treatment options and decisions. Don't give control over your life and your situation to someone else. Stand up for your needs. If you feel that you are not coping with these changes, help is at hand, you just have to reach out for it.

Working through it

Face these fears by talking to family and friends. Support groups and counselling will also help. Communication with those who have been there can help you know what to expect and prepare for all the possibilities. Once you know more about what's happening, you won't fear it as much.

Sadness and depression

You might also feel sadness and depression at times. There may be many reasons for feeling low. Short-term sadness is perfectly normal, but get professional help, reach out to a support network or counsellor if you don't feel better after a few weeks.

A diagnosis of cancer destroys our illusion that we might live forever and forces us to come to terms with the reality that we will die someday. This realisation is harsh and very difficult to come to terms with, but the challenge is to learn to live fully and joyfully until you die, not die while you are living.

Working through it

Relaxation exercises, talking about your feelings, changing negative thoughts, acknowledging your grief and loss can help you deal with depression. Prayer and meditation can lessen feelings of anguish and sadness.

Reaching acceptance

Working through each of these emotions will not only help you accept your situation, but help you begin to feel at peace. You will feel more hopeful, and less despairing, allowing you to focus on your life's goals and to be realistic about progress and plans.

It also allows you to focus all your energy on fighting the disease and getting well again.

When you should get medical help

If these symptoms last longer than six to eight weeks, it's time to get help:

- When you lose interest in things that used to give you pleasure
- When you sleep too much or too little
- When you lose your appetite even when you feel well
- When you feel constantly tired
- When you lose the ability to think clearly or concentrate
- When you feel guilty or worthless.

If your health continues to decline the resulting depression may lead to feelings of suicide.

Extra information

The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) offers counselling from 8:00 to 20:00 every day of the year.

Visit www.sadag.co.za or call **011 262 6396** to talk to someone, or find a recommended therapist in your area.

Don't forget to find out if the therapist is a designated service provider (DSP), if they are, you won't have to pay anything for your visit.



PERSEVERANCE

You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing which you think you cannot do.

~ Eleanor Roosevelt



Cancer and communication

Communication is important in all aspects of life, but never more so than now.

You need to be able to express yourself clearly if you are to remain in control of your treatment and your life, and to get the kind of support you need and want from friends, family and your medical team.

Never assume people know how you feel, or expect them to understand what you're going through: if you don't tell them how you feel they won't know!

Good communication requires both listening and speaking.

Learn to express yourself clearly with these five steps:

Five skills of communication

- 01 | Be assertive:** Show that what you are saying is important to you. For example, when you want to ask your doctor to explain something to you, be bold, and keep asking until you understand. When it comes to your health there are no silly questions, and nothing is more important than you being well informed so that you can make the best decisions for yourself. You need to be involved in your treatment decisions, so ask as many times as you need to.
- 02 | Use 'I' language:** Examples are: I feel..., I am... or I think... rather than making statements such as 'you should...' or 'you make me feel...'. This is an open and direct way of stating your views and taking responsibility for your feelings without being confrontational. There is no reason for anyone to feel defensive or criticised when you own those feelings.
- 03 | Active listening:** Show someone that you have heard them by repeating back the message you've heard. Say: 'What I hear you saying is ...' or 'Do I understand you correctly that...'

- 04 | Match words and gestures:** The way we say something is just as important as the words we use. Make sure that your body language says the same thing as your words. Non-verbal expressions can sometimes send a different message to what you're saying, and that can be confusing.
- 05 | Express your feelings as well as your thoughts:** Communicating both feelings and thoughts will allow others to understand and help you constructively. Bottling feelings such as anger and fear cause unnecessary stress. Find the right person to talk to, someone who can understand, and who relates to what you are saying. This will help you release these feelings. Support groups are a good place to express yourself. They allow you to connect with people who are going through a similar experience.

Remember this is about your life and your health. Use these communication skills to develop good relationships with your medical team.

Ask questions!

Asking for more information when you need to, will empower you and help you feel more involved in your own journey. The more informed you are the less you will be influenced by myths, unrealistic promises or the bad experiences of others. Learning about your treatment will help you to manage side effects and physical aspects. This is a crucial part of learning to live with cancer.

Friends and family

For many friends and family members your cancer journey is also theirs. It is as difficult as yours. While you actively fight the cancer they can only observe; this may make them feel frustrated and helpless. Give them time, and help them to know what kind of support you need, they have to learn how to listen and become supportive.

Existing problems in a relationship can be made worse by the diagnosis of cancer. Uncertainties and concerns about the illness may cause instability. Normal family relations and friendships can be disrupted. Family members and friends may be unsure of how to react to you and may need guidelines on how to cope. A social worker or counsellor can help. Learning to speak your mind will help those around you to be aware of your needs and expectations. For example: you may be exhausted and overwhelmed following treatments like radiation and chemotherapy. Discussing this with your family and friends will help them know what to expect and how they can help.

Your family and friends will share your fears and anxieties. Honestly discussing these thoughts and emotions helps all of you accept the uncertainty of the future, allowing you to live meaningfully in the present.

They may feel frightened by what is going to happen to you. They might fear the new responsibilities they now have to face. Family roles might change. Fathers may suddenly find themselves preparing dinner and doing homework. Wives may become the breadwinners. This disrupts and threatens the family unit.

It can be very helpful to have professional help in dealing with family issues as they can become very difficult and sensitive, and should not be a source of stress to anyone.

Remember you are not alone, the family unit has great strength when everyone works together. Let family members and friends do some of the organising, errands, and chores for you. This can encourage unity and may even lessen any tension.



When I was diagnosed with cancer, I decided to see my life as a journey. I was on a journey through cancer. I wasn't able to change my diagnosis, but I was responsible for what I would do on this journey. Each morning I would think about how I wanted my day to be and then I would try and create it.

Cancer not only changes you, but also those around you. People might behave in ways you wouldn't expect. Some friends disappear and others hang around too much. Try not to shut people out. Remember that they love you and care for you and would like to help you – you just need to let them know what kind of help will be most useful to you. You'll find if you can be open and honest with them, in a loving way, it will strengthen your bond.

Celebrate life, even with your cancer

This might sound like a strange time to be talking about celebrations. But there are things you can do to make every day count, to make the most of each moment, even when you are feeling truly terrible. Survivors say that the one thing cancer teaches you is never to take a single day for granted.



Develop a positive attitude

If you believe that you are completely powerless to do anything about your condition, your attitude will be hopeless and helpless. You will find yourself using negative words.

If you believe that you can take control of how you deal with your situation, your attitude and thoughts will be more positive. Direct the 'why' of cancer into a 'how to'. Recognise that positive opportunities can come from a diagnosis of cancer. Change your worries into positive action.

Instead of letting your diagnosis terrify you, try to see it as a challenge. By changing your perception you will find a source of strength you never believed you had.

During a diagnosis of cancer people often feel that they have no choices. You do have a choice about what your attitude will be during this trying time.

Listen to what you are saying to yourself. If you find yourself with negative thoughts, stop and replace them with positive ones. Allow yourself to be sad and angry. But also allow yourself the possibility of feeling better tomorrow.

Allow yourself to be sad and angry. But also allow yourself the possibility of feeling better tomorrow.

Learn to forgive

When someone has done something that upsets us, we feel sad, angry and hurt. If we refuse to forgive, we use up energy on staying angry and over time this creates stress in our bodies. It's we who suffer – not the person or thing that we are angry at.

Forgiveness does not mean forgetting what happened to you. It is about healing the memory of what happened to you. It will still be part of your history, but it does not have to dominate your life. By forgiving, you free yourself from the emotions and thoughts of the past.

Forgiveness also extends to forgiving yourself and begins with the acceptance and love of self. Acceptance is a vital step in coming to terms with cancer. Working through all the emotional stages enables you to reach a quiet state of expectation that is not hopeless or helpless. You are now able to focus on realistic future goals.

Set goals and make plans for the future

Setting goals and then achieving them gives you victories and something to look forward to!

Set small goals every day, and when you achieve this goal you feel a sense of control and reward. It gives purpose to your day. Then set bigger goals, perhaps getting together with a friend or doing some exercise, and work towards them. Each goal you achieve is another step on the way to celebrating life.

Plans for the future might need to change to fit in with your new outlook, but don't give up on them. Find creative ways to pursue them.

Find purpose in your life

With a cancer diagnosis comes a jolt into action. Finding your purpose in life means celebrating who you are and finding value in what you do. Often cancer survivors find new meaning to life. What will you do with yours?

Live in the moment

It's easy to find yourself dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. But by living in the moment – being fully present – in whatever you do, you will start to experience the fullness of life.

Instead of focusing on the time that you might not be able to spend with your family and friends, embrace them, let them fill your life and be thankful for each second that you can be with them.

Faith

Faith and spirituality can be a strong support and comfort. No matter what your religion, it means you feel cared for at a time when loneliness can overwhelm you. The practice of prayer and meditation can bring about a sense of inner peace and acceptance. Many physical and emotional benefits related to meditation and prayer have been documented. These are a valuable aid in promoting mind body health.



HAPPINESS

Having cancer means that you're never the same again...
but what is important to me is to make my life count.



Ways to help you cope

Keep the word COPE strongly in your mind, as each letter of the word stands for an important part of learning to live with cancer:

C is for **CONTROL** – take control of what you can

O is for **OPEN COMMUNICATION** – open channels with family, friends and your medical team

P is for **POSITIVE** – develop positive coping skills

E is for **EXPERT** – learn to find all the information you need to help you make informed decisions

What you can do to feel more in control

- Seek knowledge and ask questions.
- Participate in making treatment decisions.
- Improve your communication skills.
- Learn to express your thoughts and emotions in an appropriate way.
- Set goals on all levels of your life.
- Keep a journal which puts you in touch with what is happening in your daily life, and helps you remember all the things you can still be grateful for.
- Learn to ask for and accept help.
- Learn new skills like relaxation and visualisation.
- Consider counselling if you have difficulty in coping.
- Develop your acceptance of what is happening.
- Be in touch with what your body needs.
- Make some simple healthy lifestyle changes.
- Deal with and change negative behaviours such as isolating yourself, blaming others, and cursing others. These attitudes are destructive to relationships and will prevent you from coming to terms with your illness.
- Reduce stress.
- Allow your spirituality and faith to grow and support you.

Remember that cancer can be beaten.

Up until my diagnosis of cancer, I didn't feel that my life had a purpose. I seemed to drift from one day to the next without thinking of who I was and what contribution I wanted to make to my world. I realised that I had valuable knowledge to pass onto others. Part of my journey has been to talk to people who have been diagnosed with cancer and help some of them through this difficult time.



Worry does not empty
tomorrow of its sorrow, it
empties today of its strength.

~ *Corrie Boom*





04

My directory and
glossary of terms

My directory and glossary of terms

This section lists all the important contact details you might need: support groups, a list of links and organisations for more information and assistance.

You'll also find a useful glossary of the cancer and treatment terms you might hear, space to write some notes and questions for your doctor, as well as some games to keep you busy during treatments.

Support groups

canSurvive©

Gauteng | Johannesburg, Pretoria,
Midrand, Parktown

Chris Olivier | 083 640 4949

www.cansurvive.org

People Living With Cancer (PLWC)

National | 0861 275 669 – ask for
details of a support group in your area.

Cape Town | Linda Greeff – 021 949 4060
or 082 551 3310 or 08000 33 337

www.plwc.org.za

The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA)

Find a support group in your area.

Toll-free telephone | 0800 22 66 22

National office | 011 616 7662

Email | info@cansa.org.za

www.cansa.org.za

Hoping is Coping (Johannesburg)

For you and your family if you're
newly diagnosed.

Call Joanne on 011 485 3269
in the mornings only.

CHOC | Childhood Cancer Foundation of SA

CHOC provides direct practical help
to children with cancer.

Telephone | 086 111 3500

Email | national@choc.org.za

www.choc.org.za

Prostate Support Group (Cape)

Call | 073 560 3067
or 021 786 16 71

The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG)

Find a general mental health support
group in your area.

Call | 011 262 6396

www.sadag.co.za

Regional offices and support groups:

Eastern Cape

East London | 043 727 0120

Port Elizabeth | 041 373 5157

Free State

Bethlehem | 087 940 8099

Bloemfontein | 051 444 2580

Welkom | 057 353 2112

Gauteng | **011 615 4425**

East Rand | 087 940 8097

Houghton | 087 940 8075

Pretoria | 012 329 3036

Soweto | 083 599 9362
or 073 641 7184

Vaal Triangle | 016 423 3506

Western Gauteng | 011 768 4342

KwaZulu-Natal

Durban | 031 205 9525

Newcastle | 034 315 1751

Pietermaritzburg | 033 342 9837

Port Shepstone | 039 682 7680

uThungulu
(Empangeni) | 035 772 5677

Mpumalanga

| 013 752 3996
or 013 752 4038

Nelspruit | 013 741 5442

Witbank | 013 656 5420

North West

Klerksdorp | 018 469 1889

Rustenburg | 014 533 0694

Northern Cape | **051 444 2580**

Kimberley | 053 831 2968

Upington | 054 332 4937

Western Cape | **021 689 5347**

Cape Metro | 021 689 5347

George | 044 874 4824

Malmesbury | 022 482 1111

Onrus | 028 316 3678

Worcester | 023 342 7058

Limpopo

Modimolle
(Nylstroom) | 014 717 4741

Polokwane
(Pietersburg) | 015 297 1268

Breast cancer support groups

My Breast

National support number | 0860 283 343

Email | info@mybreastcancersupport.org

www.mybreast.org.za

Reach for Recovery

Reach for Recovery provides practical and emotional support to breast cancer patients and their families.

Call Val on 011 648 0990 for all queries.

www.reach4recovery.org.za

National Manager

Stephanie van Deventer

+27 79 462 3973

nationalmanager@reach4recovery.org.za

See website for regional support groups

<http://www.reach4recovery.org.za/contact-us/>

Information links and resources

The Breast Health Foundation

The Breast Health Foundation aims to educate, increase awareness, and empower women on breast cancer and breast health issues.

www.mybreast.org.za

Campaigning for Cancer

Campaigning for Cancer is an advocacy organisation that was formed to give South African patients and those affected by cancer a voice. Campaigning for Cancer lobbies for the promotion and protection of the rights of patients and those affected by cancer with regard to policy, healthcare costs and healthcare delivery.

www.campaign4cancer.co.za

The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA)

CANSA helps answer your questions and provide information on issues from treatment and support to where you can go for a mammogram, risk factors, warning signs, prevention and practical and emotional support.

Telephone | 0800 22 66 22

www.cansa.org.za

Cancersupport.co.za

Cancersupport is an online forum where cancer sufferers can express themselves, share and learn and support each other.

www.cancersupport.co.za

Childhood Cancer Foundation SA (CHOC)

CHOC provides direct practical help to children with cancer, from diagnosis onwards; including accommodation in CHOC Houses; support groups for parents; support to the state-funded academic treatment centres in the form of furnishings and equipment; support to the health professionals working in the field of paediatric oncology; advocacy and support into research studies and investigating the causes and treatment of childhood cancer.

Telephone | 086 111 3500

Email | national@choc.org.za

www.choc.org.za

Discovery Health's Discovery Care oncology team

Hospital preauthorisations email
preauthorisations@discovery.co.za

Oncology preauthorisations email
DCO_Oncology@discovery.co.za

Oncology preauthorisations fax number
011 539 5417

DiscoveryCare oncology team
0860 99 88 77

www.discovery.co.za

Home Nursing Services

For nursing agencies in all provinces

Call | 0861 275 669

Hospice Palliative Care Association of SA

Hospice Palliative Care works to promote quality of life, dignity in death and support in bereavement for all living with a life-threatening illness.

Telephone | 021 531 2094

Email | hpca@iafrica.com

Hospicepalliativecaresa.co.za

Livestrong

The LAF is based in the US, but aims to improve the lives of all people living with cancer. Look up information and watch videos on the website.

www.livestrong.org

Look Good Feel Better

Look Good Feel Better offers free workshops to help women with cancer boost their confidence by taking care of their appearance.

www.lgfb.co.za

The Netcare Breast Care Centre of Excellence

The Netcare Breast Care Centre of Excellence is dedicated to recommending and providing specialist breast care for all South African women – whether or not they have medical aid cover. You will be referred to your nearest appropriate medical facility for necessary treatment. The Centre also provides telephonic advice and counselling.

Telephone | 0860 233 233

www.breasthealth.co.za

People living with cancer

People living with cancer was started to ensure that all people living with cancer have access to information, peer support, resources and services that assist them in regaining their lives after diagnosis.

Telephone | 0861 275 669

www.plwc.org.za

Reach for Recovery

An international breast cancer support group, it provides practical and emotional support to breast cancer patients and their families.

www.reach4recovery.org.za

The South African Anxiety and Depression Group (SADAG)

SADAG offers counselling and a referral Network of recommended therapists. Call anytime from 8:00 to 20:00 every day of the year, for any kind of mental health or emotional support.

Telephone | 011 262-6396

www.sadag.co.za

Sunflower Fund

The Sunflower Fund works to educate and recruit potential bone marrow stem cell donors who are ethnically diverse.

Telephone | 0800 121 082

www.sunflowerfund.org.za

International Union Against Cancer (UICC)

UICC is a global organisation dedicated to preventing and controlling cancer.

www.uicc.org

The South African Oncology Consortium

The South African Oncology Consortium was established to make cancer treatment available to all. It represents the majority of cancer specialists in both the private and public healthcare sectors in South Africa, and aims to coordinate the way cancer treatment is given, in line with international standards.

www.saoc.org.za

Glossary

Your guide to important cancer terms

Use this handy list to navigate through some of the cancer terms that you'll be hearing.

Bone density scans: This is a diagnostic test to measure the bone mineral density. Certain cancer treatments can make you prone to brittle bones and osteoporosis.

Benign tumour: Not cancerous lump, does not invade nearby tissue or spread to other parts of the body.

Biopsy: The removal of cells or tissue so they can be examined under a microscope.

Breast self-examination: A method of manually checking one's own breasts for lumps or changes (see box below).

Brachytherapy: A form of radiotherapy where radioactive material is placed inside the body near the tumour or diseased tissue.

Calcification: When calcium collects in tiny deposits within the breast (related to breast cancer).

Carcinoma: Cancer that begins in the epithelial cells that make up the skin or the tissue that line or cover the internal organs.

Chemotherapy: Treatment with medicine to destroy cancer cells. Often used in conjunction

with surgery or radiation if cancer has spread or come back or when there is a chance that it could come back.

Clinical exam: A visual and manual Examination of the body or body part by a healthcare professional such as a doctor or nurse.

Cyst: A sac filled with fluid within the breast. Because a doctor can't always tell if a lump is a cyst, this fluid may need to be removed with a needle and then analysed (biopsy).

Fibrosis: The formation of fibrous scar-like tissue anywhere in the body.

Gallium scan: A scan that uses a tiny amount of a radioactive material to look at internal organs and reveal areas of inflammation.

Inflammatory breast cancer: An aggressive type of breast cancer that occurs in sheets or nests rather than in solid, confined tumours. Patients have a tender, hot, red breast. This type of cancer can be difficult to see in a mammogram or scan and requires core biopsy.

Invasive (or infiltrating) cancer: Cancer that has spread beyond the layer of tissues where it developed, into the healthy tissues nearby.

Lesion: Refers to any abnormality in any part

of the body, such as: a wound, infection, tumour, abscess or chemical abnormality.

Lumpectomy: The surgical removal of a tumour and a little of the surrounding normal tissue. This surgery is often followed by radiation to reduce the risk of it coming back.

Malignant tumour: A cancerous growth, which tends to invade and destroy surrounding tissue and spread to other parts of the body.

Mammogram: A special X-ray of the breast to help detect breast cancer or lumps that can't be felt.

Mastectomy: Surgery to remove the whole breast and some lymph nodes to prevent the spread of breast cancer.

Metastasis: When cancer spreads to other parts of the body. (For example, if breast cancer appears in the lungs, you would say your breast cancer has metastasised.)

Palliation: Care that manages symptoms of cancer only, rather than the causes, in order to make patients as comfortable as possible.

PET scan: An imaging test that uses a radioactive substance called a tracer to look for disease in the body. The scan can tell the difference between normal and abnormal cells. (PET stands for positron emission tomography.)

Radiology: X-rays, ultrasound scanning, MRI and other non-invasive techniques used to investigate, diagnose and treat cancer.

Radiotherapy: The use of radiation therapy to treat cancer. Radiation destroys or slows down the growth of abnormal cells. Normal cells should suffer little or no damage in the long term, but short-term damage is a side effect.

Reconstructive surgery: Using plastic surgery to re-create an area of the body after surgery. For example reconstructive breast surgery after a mastectomy or lumpectomy (which can be done at the same time).

Tumour: An abnormal lump or mass of tissue. Tumours can be benign (not cancerous) or malignant (cancerous).

Ultrasound: A method of diagnosing illness and viewing internal body structures in which sound waves of high frequency are bounced off internal organs and tissues from outside the body.

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.

~ *Hellen Keller*





05

Keeping notes and
things to do during treatment



ENDURANCE

If you're going through hell, keep going.

~ Winston Churchill



Remember what you need to ask your doctor

Use this handy checklist as a reminder of some of the things you might want to discuss with your specialist. Tick the questions you want to ask or add your own:

- Where is the cancer?
- What kinds of cancer do or did I have?
- How common is my cancer?
- What stage is my cancer?
- What is my prognosis?
- Has it spread? If so, to where?
- How fast or slow-growing is this cancer?
- What symptoms will the cancer cause?
- Is there any room for doubt regarding the test results and diagnosis?
- If I seek a second opinion, can I take copies of test results, X-rays and reports?
- Are any other tests required? If so, what are they and what would they be looking for?
- Will further tests hurt?
- What symptoms are likely if the cancer progresses?
- What are the treatment options?
- Which treatment do you recommend, and why?
- How soon do I have to start my treatment?
- How often is the treatment necessary?

- What are the benefits versus the risks of treatment?
- Is the treatment aimed at a cure, remission (control) or a reaction?
- What are the likely side effects of the treatment?
- How can these be minimised? How much will treatment cost?
- What should I do or not do while having treatment?
- How long will it be before I know if the treatment is working?
- How can I manage the pain?
- Are there long-term side effects to my treatment or medicine and what are these?
- Who will be in charge of treatment – how can I contact them?
- How will the treatment impact on my work, my relationships and my lifestyle?
- Do members of my family have a greater risk of getting cancer?
- What counseling or support services are available?
- What happens after treatment?
- Is there anything else I should be asking?
- Is there anything I can read about this?

Things to do during treatment

Sudoku

Fill in the blanks so that each row, each column, and each of the nine 3x3 grids contain the numbers 1 to 9 one time each.

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Things to do during treatment

Sudoku (easy)

Fill in the blanks so that each row, each column, and each of the nine 3x3 grids contain the numbers 1 to 9 one time each.

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| 4 | 8 | | | | 2 | | | |
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| 1 | | | 4 | | | 3 | | |
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Things to do during treatment

Sudoku (medium)

Fill in the blanks so that each row, each column, and each of the nine 3x3 grids contain the numbers 1 to 9 one time each.

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| 2 | | 5 | 1 | | 7 | | | 8 |
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| | 5 | 2 | | 7 | | 8 | | |
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| 9 | | | | | | 2 | | |
| | | | 7 | 6 | | 5 | | |
| 1 | 3 | | | | 9 | 6 | 4 | |
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| 7 | | | 8 | 3 | | | | 6 |
| 6 | | 5 | | | 4 | 7 | 2 | |
| 4 | | | 5 | 6 | | | | |
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Things to do during treatment

Sudoku (medium)

Fill in the blanks so that each row, each column, and each of the nine 3x3 grids contain the numbers 1 to 9 one time each.

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| 3 | | | | | 1 | | | 8 |
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Things to do during treatment

Sudoku (difficult)

Fill in the blanks so that each row, each column, and each of the nine 3x3 grids contain the numbers 1 to 9 one time each.

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| | 5 | | | 9 | | | | 2 |
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| | | 6 | | | 4 | | | 7 |
| | 8 | | 6 | | 1 | | | 5 |
| 6 | | 7 | | | | | | 8 |
| | 9 | 8 | | | 2 | | | |
| | | | | 3 | 9 | | | |

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| | | | 9 | | 6 | | | 5 |
| | 2 | | 1 | | 4 | | | |
| | | | | 7 | | | 5 | 1 |
| | 9 | | | | | | 8 | |
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Things to do during treatment

Sudoku (difficult)

Fill in the blanks so that each row, each column, and each of the nine 3x3 grids contain the numbers 1 to 9 one time each.

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| 3 | 8 | | 9 | 2 | | | | 6 |
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| 9 | | 2 | | 3 | 5 | | 4 | 1 |
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| | | 2 | 7 | | | | | |
| | 9 | 5 | 2 | | | | 7 | |
| 2 | | 1 | | | | | | |
| 4 | | | 3 | | | 8 | 1 | |
| 3 | | | 9 | | | 1 | 5 | |
| 1 | | | 5 | 2 | | 9 | | |
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Things to do during treatment

Sudoku (difficult)

Fill in the blanks so that each row, each column, and each of the nine 3x3 grids contain the numbers 1 to 9 one time each.

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| | 9 | | | | | | | |
| | 5 | 8 | 2 | | | | 1 | |
| | 1 | | | | 9 | 3 | 8 | 2 |
| 5 | 6 | | | | | 4 | | |
| | | | | | 8 | 1 | 5 | |
| | | | 5 | | | | | 3 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | | 6 | 4 | | | | | 8 |
| 5 | 4 | | 2 | | | | 1 | 3 |
| | | 2 | | 9 | 5 | | | |
| | 1 | | | 2 | | 8 | 6 | |
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| 4 | | | 9 | | | | | |
| | 3 | | | | | 2 | | |
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Things to do during treatment

Word Search

Circle the words from the list below the grid.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U | I | L | B | U | J | I | V | M | N | G | A | M | T | S |
| L | A | M | U | I | N | A | R | C | Y | L | L | A | A | F |
| N | C | K | U | R | C | A | Y | B | R | G | L | N | R | F |
| A | K | L | U | R | L | O | V | X | Z | X | E | D | S | Y |
| Y | S | M | A | U | C | E | C | H | Z | S | T | I | A | V |
| C | E | U | P | V | R | A | A | Y | L | Y | A | B | L | N |
| F | A | A | R | T | I | R | S | A | X | C | P | L | S | X |
| H | C | R | E | E | I | C | P | Q | G | B | O | E | F | X |
| S | D | B | P | B | M | R | L | S | T | E | R | N | U | M |
| C | R | F | E | A | A | U | F | E | S | U | I | D | A | R |
| A | Y | J | T | C | L | I | H | R | I | E | R | G | J | W |
| K | R | G | A | X | B | S | Q | K | V | K | S | O | W | M |
| H | S | T | X | U | C | P | H | A | L | A | N | G | E | S |
| N | E | A | L | A | T | R | I | C | E | Z | D | Z | F | M |
| M | L | A | T | I | B | I | A | Z | P | V | W | N | A | G |

CARPALS

CRANIUM

HUMERUS

PATELLA

RADIUS

SCAPULA

TIBIA

CLAVICLE

FEMUR

MANDIBLE

PELVIS

RIB

STERNUM

ULNA

COCYX

FIBULA

METACARPALS

PHALANGES

SACRUM

TARSALS

VERTEBRA

Things to do during treatment

Word Search

Circle the words from the list below the grid.

Challenge yourself with a search for these African countries:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | C | C | M | I | T | U | O | B | I | J | D | E | I | L | G |
| E | L | O | A | A | A | C | E | P | A | H | N | A | E | N | E |
| N | T | O | M | P | D | H | M | U | X | R | N | S | I | A | R |
| I | A | S | G | O | E | A | F | J | J | F | O | N | N | W | I |
| U | Y | G | A | N | R | D | G | A | J | T | E | I | V | G | T |
| G | N | S | D | O | A | O | Y | A | H | B | K | R | H | Y | R |
| V | E | R | D | E | C | B | S | O | S | R | H | A | O | C | E |
| B | K | G | F | N | I | O | H | A | U | C | N | A | A | W | A |
| A | G | O | Y | L | F | T | Y | B | I | A | A | M | K | W | V |
| A | A | J | I | P | T | S | S | Q | X | P | E | R | A | F | N |
| I | B | M | Y | P | T | W | Z | O | J | R | O | F | A | S | O |
| R | O | O | Q | B | X | A | G | B | O | Q | T | I | B | S | O |
| E | N | O | F | X | N | N | N | O | D | Z | X | T | H | M | Z |
| G | F | B | Z | H | V | A | N | R | A | T | X | L | B | T | V |
| L | O | H | L | D | J | B | U | R | U | N | D | I | T | P | E |
| A | A | I | R | E | B | I | L | Y | R | O | V | I | I | B | Y |

ALGERIA

MADAGASCAR

LESOTHO

GUINEA

IVORY

BURKINA

ANGOLA

VERDE

LIBERIA

LIBYA

CHAD

BURUNDI

BENIN

BOTSWANA

EGYPT

COAST

CAMEROON

CAPE

GABON

ERITREA

COMOROS

DJIBOUTI

KENYA

GHANA

ETHIOPIA

FASO

Things to do during treatment

Word Search

Circle the words from the list below the grid.

Find the African animals hiding in this puzzle:

A J S Y O H B B S E R H T A E C U A E K
W A K O Y G U A L R I J S N Y A N P D B
C X R E R S N I B P T T E T A M G E V G
O A N D H E D I P O Z R E E L E T P E M
N A R B V O C O M E O T B L L L I M R E
T O A A C A P O S A S N E O I C S E M E
E B I O C O R O N G L I D P R B G R C R
Y J R L T A O K B I H F L E O R O U H K
K C A A K G L O I R H K I K G W H T E A
Q H M T N A H P E L E R W B S Z E L E T
W U X O S P E E Z N A P M I H C G U T J
S O M B U F F A L O L E O P A R D V A H
G H E F F A R I G H C I R T S O E F H J
J J D A R B E Z E D Q Y W A R T H O G N
I P L B B X I Y S A W W N F U Z X X K M
N A H C D B S P R I N G B O K U B C U B

AARDVARK

RHINOCEROS

HIPPOPOTAMUS

ELEPHANT

CHEETAH

BUSHBABY

WILDEBEEST

MEERKAT

GNU

FLAMINGO

CHIMPANZEE

ANTELOPE

SPRINGBOK

HYENA

GORILLA

GEMSBOK

CAMEL

ZEBRA

MONGOOSE

LEOPARD

HEDGEHOG

CROCODILE

BABOON

VULTURE

OSTRICH

LION

GIRAFFE

CARACAL

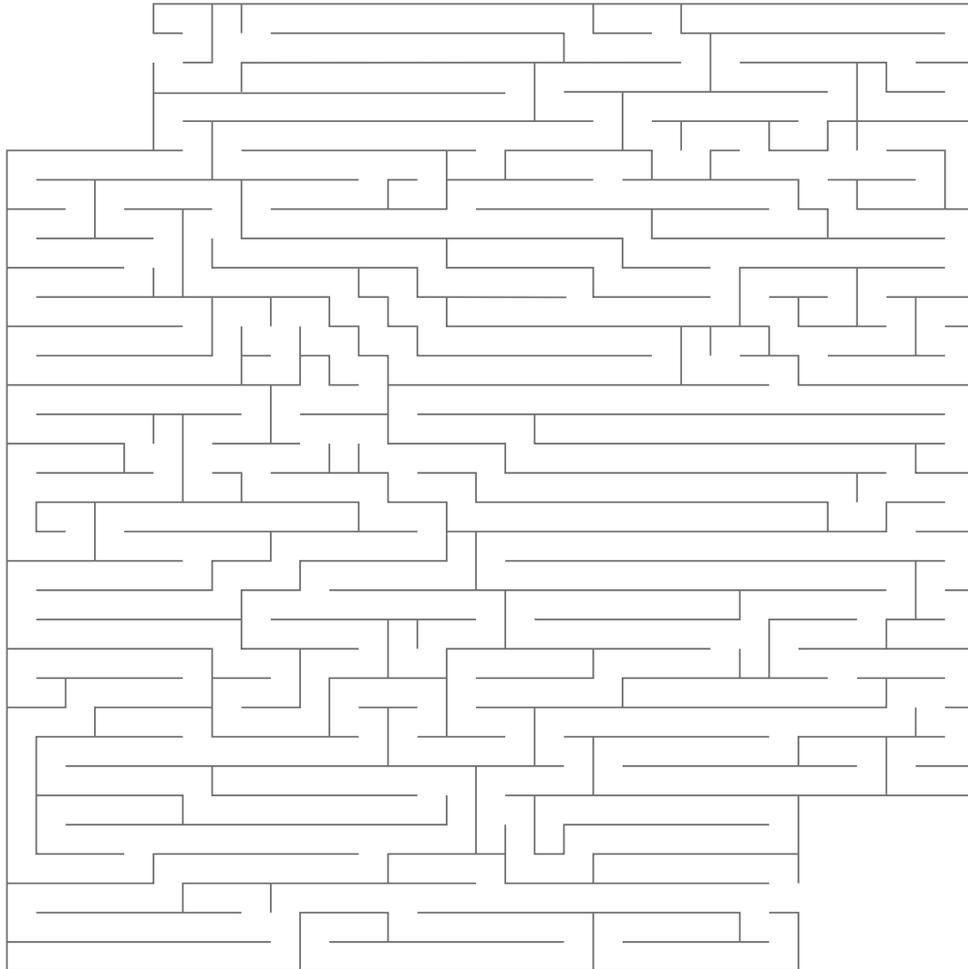
BUFFALO

WARTHOG

Things to do during treatment

Mazes

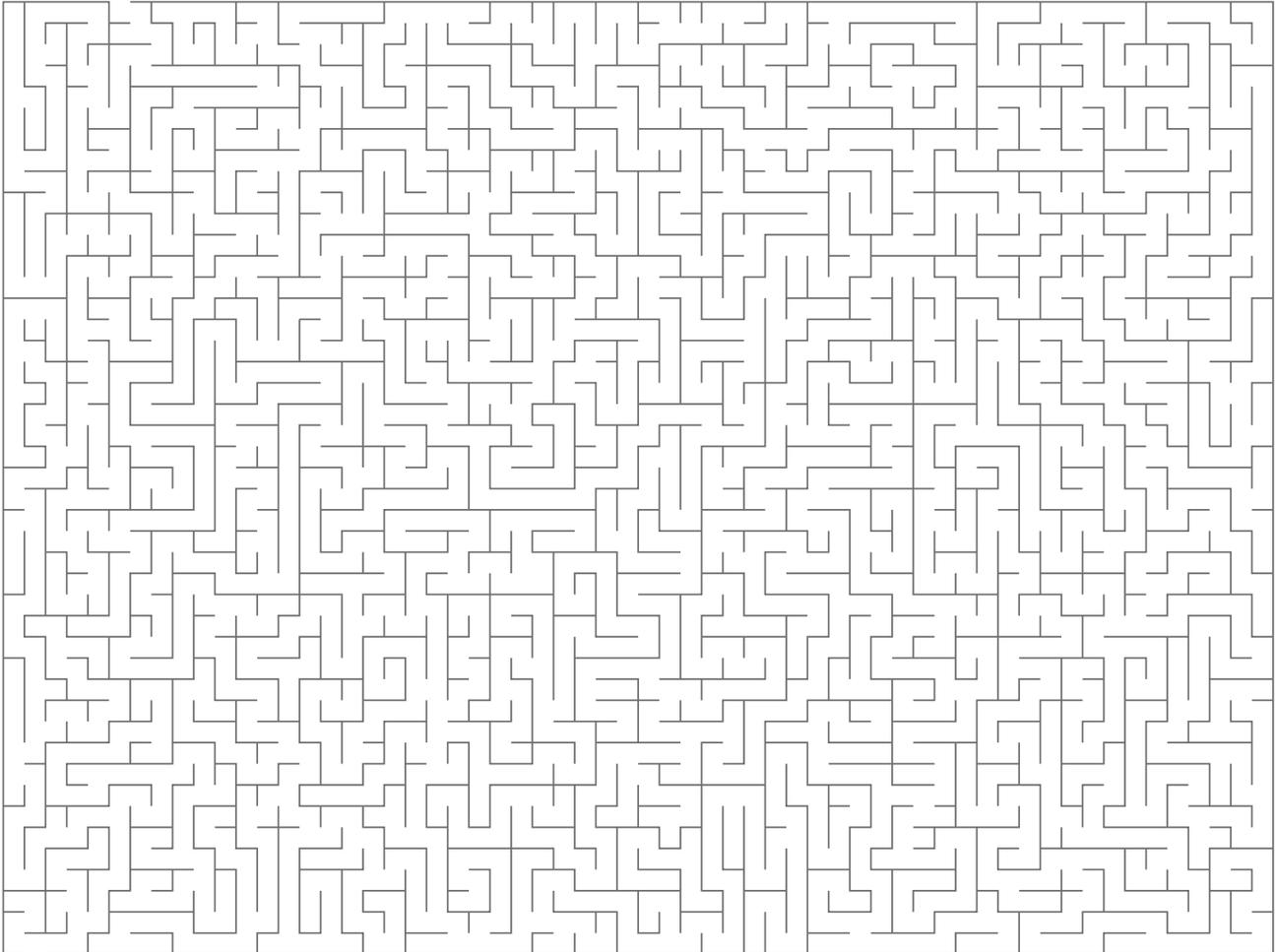
Enjoy these busy, slightly hard to do mazes.



Things to do during treatment

Mazes

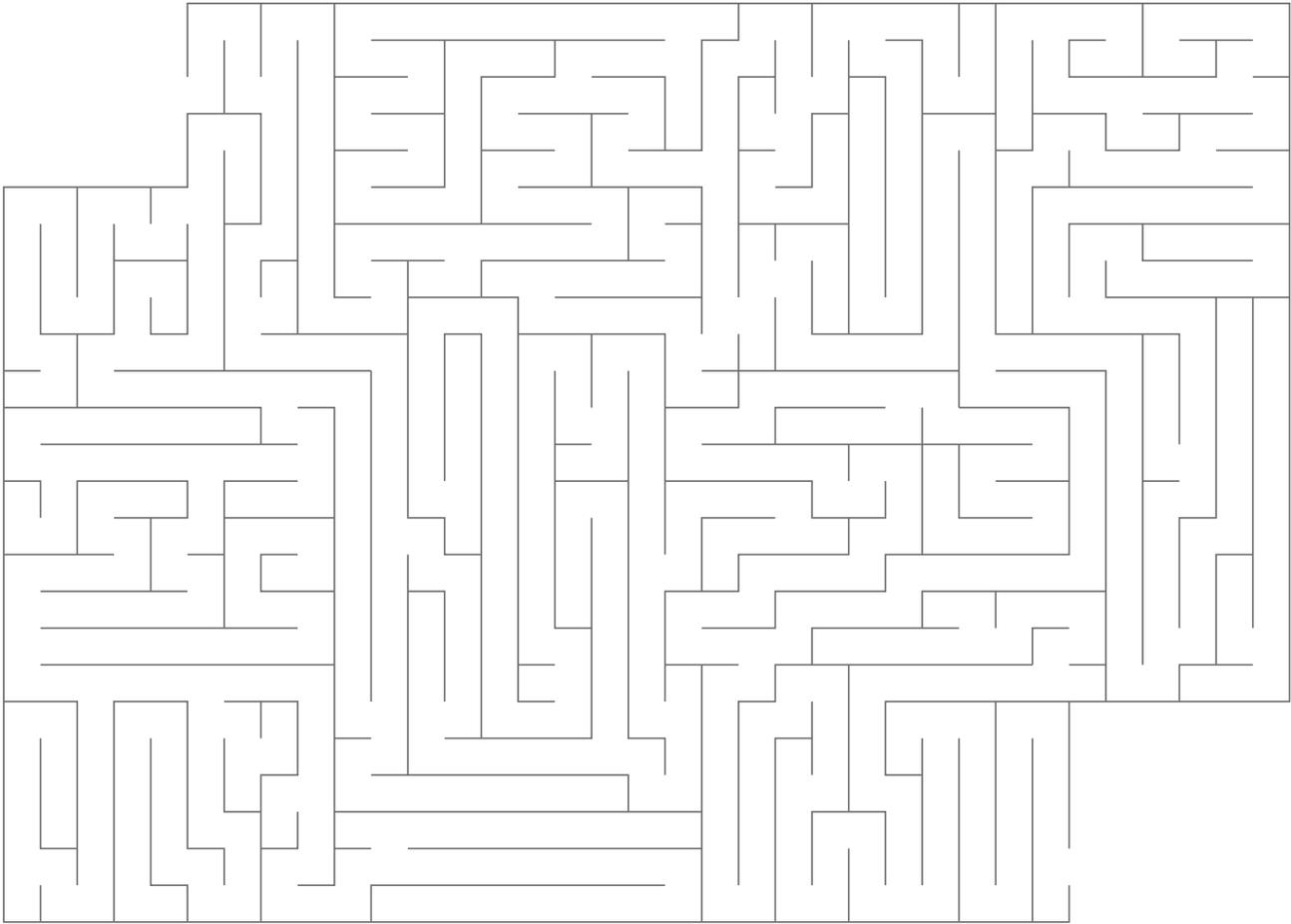
Enjoy these busy, slightly hard to do mazes.



Things to do during treatment

Mazes

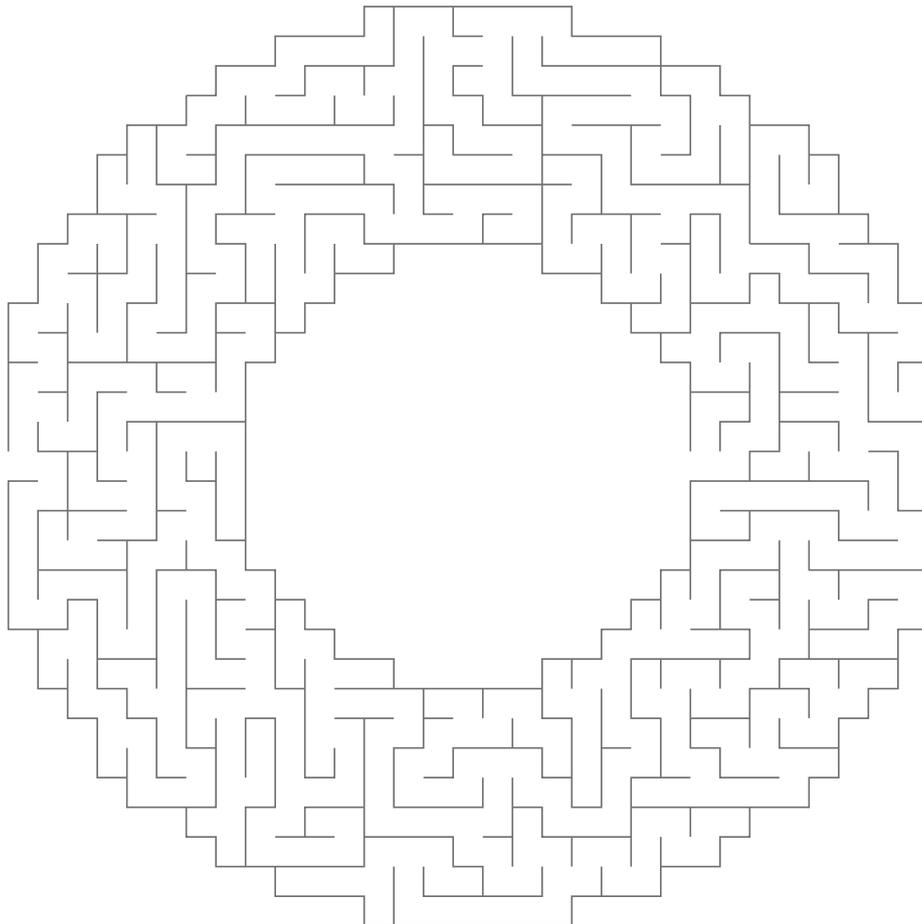
Enjoy these busy, slightly hard to do mazes.



Things to do during treatment

Mazes

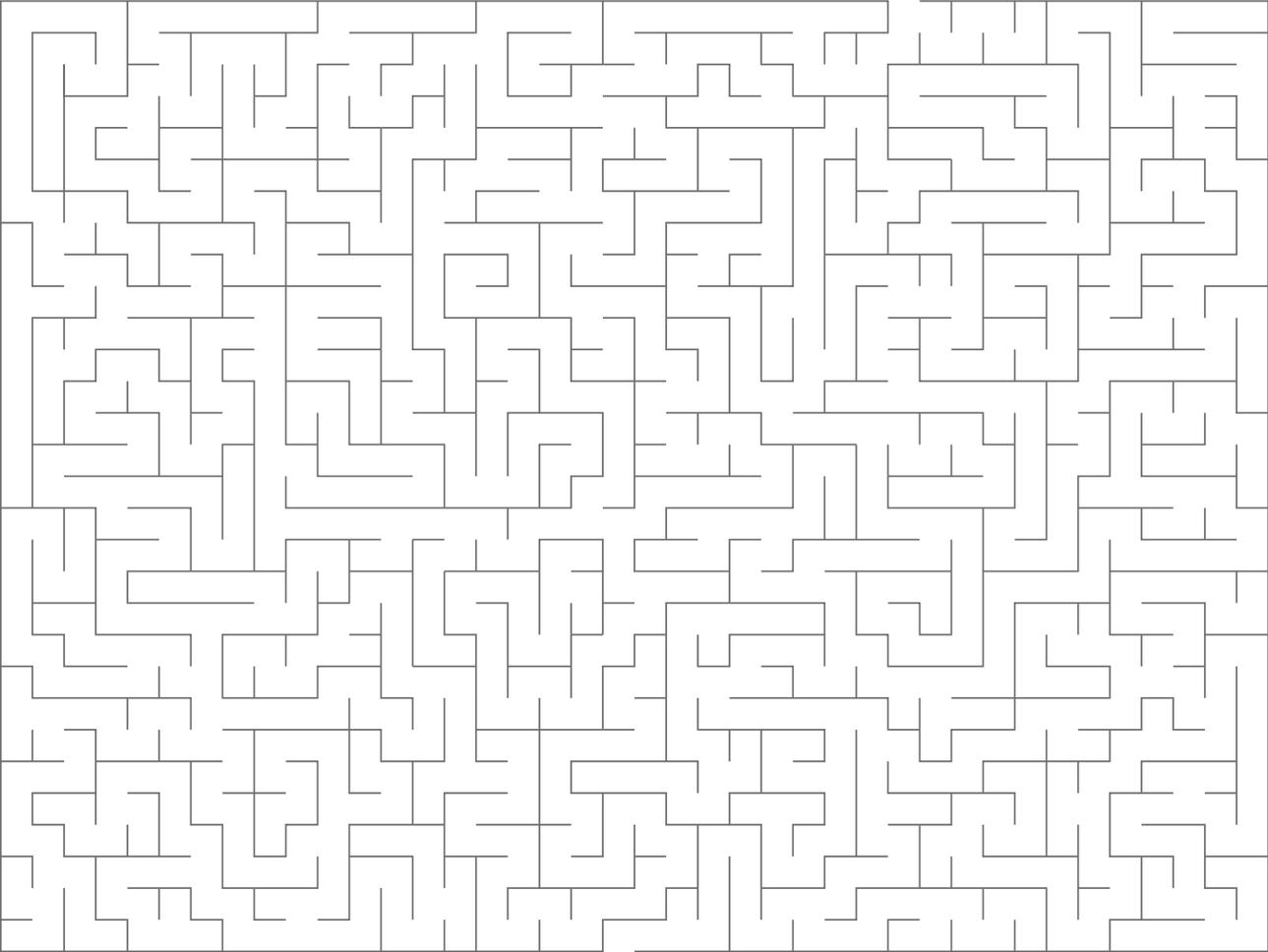
Enjoy these busy, slightly hard to do mazes.



Things to do during treatment

Mazes

Enjoy these busy, slightly hard to do mazes.



Discovery Health

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