

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT TO CANCER PATIENTS

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**Abstract:** If you need help, there are teams of experts available who understand how cancer affects a person and their loved ones.

It is normal to need some extra help when you're dealing with cancer. In fact, studies show that people with cancer who have social and resource support report better quality of life. But many people who could benefit from support services don't use them because they don't know about them or don't know how to find them. Some people have more specific mood changes, such as anxiety, depression and distress.

Psychosocial support can include counseling, education, spiritual support, group support, and other services. These services may be provided by psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, psychiatric clinical nurse specialists or nurse practitioners, licensed counselors, or pastoral counselors. They can help you deal with your issues and refer you to other types of support as needed.

Think about the kinds of problems you have, how much your emotions bother you, and how you have coped in the past. This will help you decide which services can best help you.

You should also talk to your cancer care team about any psychosocial problems you are having, so they can help you find the right support.

Support groups bring together people with similar situations. In these groups, people can share their concerns and learn how others have coped. Support groups can help people deal with their feelings and side effects of treatment. They may also help members make decisions by sharing what they have learned. Support groups might also help a person figure out how to deal family concerns or day to day issues like work and money concerns.

There are support groups for all sorts of people with cancer. For instance, groups may be for:

- People with a certain kind of cancer
- People with any type of cancer
- People getting a certain treatment
- People at a certain point in their cancer (such as ending treatment or dealing with cancer that has come back)
  - Women or men only
  - People in certain age groups

There are also support groups for families, children, and caregivers of people with cancer. These groups often discuss common concerns. These may include changes in relationships, fears about the person with cancer, and how to best support the person with cancer. Support group for children and teens are grouped by age. There is often a support group for parents as well.

Some groups are led by professionals, such as oncology social workers, psychologists, or oncology nurses. Other groups are led by cancer survivors. Some groups are more structured, such as those that provide education. Others are open to whatever the group members want to discuss.

There are also options for when and how support groups meet. Some support groups meet in person while others meet online. Some include the same people in each meeting while others allow people to come and go as they need.

Privacy is key for support groups. It is vital that everyone feels safe talking about their concerns and feelings. Members need to know that what they say will not be shared outside the group.

Most health insurance plans pay for some counseling, But coverage may be limited. Mental health coverage is supposed to be part of most insurance, but sometimes the amount may not meet your needs. Some policies only pay for a limited number of sessions.

An insurance plan may also limit your choices about whom you can see. Your insurance might only have contracts with certain counselors. Also, check on your co-pay and how much your insurance will pay for visits.

If you cannot afford counseling, see if there are free counseling services in the hospital or clinic where you get treated. Your oncology team should know of services in your area that may adjust fees based on your income. There might also be services offered at low or no cost.

- In the year following diagnosis, around 10% of cancer patients will experience symptoms of anxiety and depression severe enough to warrant intervention by specialist psychological/psychiatric services.

- Among those who experience recurrence of disease, the prevalence of anxiety and depression rises to 50%. Such difficulties can also be seen in 10-15% of patients with advanced disease.

- 58% of people diagnosed feel their emotional needs are not looked after as much as their physical needs

- Cancer patients have a 55% higher risk of suicide than those without cancer

- Even 10 years after treatment, 54% of cancer survivors still suffer from at least one significant psychological issue

- 67% of carers experience anxiety and 42% experience depression. Of these, over three quarters do not receive any support

- The experience of cancer and its longer term physical and psychological consequences can also have a significant economic costs to individuals, families, communities and society.

Used literature:

1. <https://cancerblog.mayoclinic.org/>
2. <https://www.cancer.org/>