

Helpful hints to keep you living well with cancer

A new cancer diagnosis is a challenge. But there are things you can do to ease the experience, so we've gathered helpful hints from others who have gone through a similar experience.

- Try to **keep a positive outlook**. Any cancer diagnosis is a challenge. Remember every person's experience with cancer is different and stories you hear may not apply to your situation.
- **Take a family member** or friend with you, if possible, when you see your oncologist.
- **Write down** information in a notebook such as the date and reason for an appointment. You may need this information to look at later, when you are talking to family members or for insurance and government forms.
- **Make a list** of things that would be helpful to you or your family, for example making a meal, or driving the kids to a hockey practice or swimming lesson. Then, when someone says, "How can I help?" you can look through your list. You, and the person offering to help, will both benefit. Friends and family may want to help but need to know how!
- You may want a **second medical opinion**. We would like to reassure you that it is alright to raise the question of a second opinion with your Chris O'Brien Lifehouse doctor during a regular appointment.
- Ask your doctor if it's okay to **record your consultation** so you can refer back to it later.

Relationships and Cancer

Cancer doesn't affect just one person. It affects those closest to you including partners, family members and friends.

Communication becomes especially important. Lack of communication can lead to isolation, frustration, and unmet needs. People who don't talk about their illness can feel they are facing cancer alone.

Talking about and sharing feelings and needs together lets couples, families, and friends work with one another to solve problems and cope with difficult situations; and reduce the stress that cancer places on relationships.

If you are having a hard talking with people, consider talking with a counselor or social worker. Find out more about counselling here.

Pets and Cancer

Our pets are an important part of our lives, and can be a wonderful source of support during treatment.

There may be times when it's hard to look after your pet while undergoing treatment.

There are arrangements you can make for your pets while you are in hospital, or if you become unable to care for them:

- Check with neighbours, family and friends if they can pop in to feed and check on your pet, take your dog for a walk or look after your pet in their home.
- Ask your local vet about volunteer support schemes, or inquire at the RSPCA.
- Or speak to your social worker.

Cancer Nutrition

Evidence shows that diet and weight management as well as regular physical activity are linked to better survival rates, lower rates of recurrence and cancer prevention.

You can read more about this in The World Cancer Research Fund's 'Diet, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Cancer: a Global Perspective'.

Though maintaining a healthy diet is essential to preserving good health and wellbeing during your treatment, symptoms and side effects can make this difficult.

An oncology nutritionist can help you make informed decisions about your diet and suggest strategies for managing symptoms and treatment side effects such as changes to appetite or taste and difficulty absorbing nutrients.

Contact our oncology nutritionist at the Lifehouse LivingRoom on (02) 8514 0038 or email livingroom@lh.org.au.

Useful resources:

- Cancer Council NSW – [Managing Nutrition Related Side Effects](#)
- Cancer Council NSW – [Staying Healthy After Treatment](#)
- iheard –Run by the Cancer Council, [discusses myths and facts relating to cancer.](#)
- Cancer Council NSW - [Healthy Family Meals](#)
- Eat for Health - [Healthy Recipes](#)

Travelling with Cancer

Cancer treatments can cause side effects that may limit your ability to travel. If you would like to travel and have cancer, you will need to plan your trip more carefully.

Side effects you may need to consider include fatigue, high risk of infection, side-effects of surgery and treatment, and the increased risk of developing a blood clot.

Some people with cancer may not be advised to travel by air for particular reasons. Before you make any plans, speak to your doctor or specialist nurse, who will advise you whether it is safe to travel, and how to alleviate symptoms or ailments while traveling, Your care team can provide advice surrounding travel insurance, certificates and dietary issues while you are away.

The Cancer Council also has a wide range of [resources](#) and [further information](#) to help you navigate living with cancer.