

# Anxiety

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**Anxiety can have a lot of names--nervousness, worry, uneasiness, or fear. Most people dealing with cancer feel some anxiety during their journey with cancer.**

## **What is anxiety?**

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, care or concern. It can range from mild to severe.

Sometimes, people feel anxious when they deal with stress or uncertainty. Fear of the unknown can cause anxiety—for example, not knowing what to expect or a feeling that something bad is going to happen. Knowing what to expect can also be a source of anxiety. Some people worry about the future or how the cancer journey will affect their life and the life of their family.

## **What are the signs of anxiety?**

Some signs of anxiety are:

- Worrying
- Feeling cranky
- Feeling restless
- Difficulty focusing
- Muscle tension
- A fast heartbeat
- Sweating
- Fear of cancer returning
- Nausea
- Feeling numb, dizzy
- Short of breath, out of breath or fast breathing
- Sleep problems
- Diarrhea
- Shaking

Anxious feelings might feel stronger or weaker at different times. They may also change as you deal with different things. Anxiety can affect your daily life. Many people find it helpful to get counselling to learn how to prevent or manage their anxiety.

**What are your questions? Please ask.  
We are here to help you.**

You may wish to seek help if your anxiety:

- Lasts for a long while
- Is very strong
- Makes it hard to get through each day

Talk to your doctor or nurse if anxiety is a problem for you or a family member. There are different health professionals who can help you.

### **What can I do about it?**

Coping is what a person does to make themselves feel better. Learning about anxiety, looking at why you feel anxious and what things may help prevent or manage it may help you cope better. So can these tips:

- **Do things that you like and find relaxing.** This might be something like reading, writing, or playing an instrument.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat a healthy diet. Get enough sleep.
- **Exercise.** Take a short walk. Do some simple stretches. Moving can help ease aches and pains.
- **Express your feelings.** Try writing down how you feel. Maybe have a good cry, throw a pillow, or turn on loud music and scream.
- **Pay attention to what triggers your anxiety.** Once you know your triggers, you can try to plan ahead to avoid what makes you anxious.
- **Let it out.** Try talking about things with someone you trust or in a support group
- **Think about talking to a professional counsellor.** He or she may help you better understand your anxiety and help you figure out ways to manage it.

**You may also be interested in online support groups.**

Cancer Chat Canada has health care professionals from Canadian Cancer Centres leading cancer support groups. Most are available to people living in any province or territory. Web address is [cancerchatcanada.ca](http://cancerchatcanada.ca).

**For more information contact your doctor or nurse or call:**

**Halifax:** Nova Scotia Cancer Centre – 1- 902-473-6067

Haematology Social Worker – 1-902-473-4072

Head and Neck Cancer Social Worker – 1-902-473-4342

**Sydney:** 902-567-7771 (Cape Breton Cancer Centre)

**Yarmouth Cancer Centre:** 1-902-742-3542 ext 1381

**All other areas:** 1-866-524-1234 (Cancer Patient Navigators – please call from a land line. Will not work from a cell phone)



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