

Coping with Cancer-Related Worry and Anxiety

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Anxiety can be described as nervousness, worry, uneasiness, or fear. Most people dealing with cancer feel some anxiety and worry during their cancer experience.

What is anxiety?

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

People sometimes feel anxious when they deal with stress or uncertainty. Fear of the unknown (i.e., not knowing what to expect or feeling that something bad is going to happen) can cause anxiety. Also, knowing what to expect may be a source of anxiety. For example, some people may worry about the future or how the cancer will affect their life and that of their family.

What are the signs of anxiety?

Some signs of anxiety to watch for include:

- Worrying
- Feeling Cranky
- Persistent Fear of Cancer Returning
- Feeling Restless
- Difficulty Focusing
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Sleep Problems
- Muscle Tension
- Shaking
- Sweating
- Fast Heartbeat
- Short of Breath/Out of Breath
- Fast Breathing
- Feeling Numb
- Dizzy
- Nausea
- Diarrhea

Anxious feelings may come and go and vary in strength. High levels of anxiety can affect your daily life and interfere with your daily activities.

What can I do to cope with anxiety?

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 reduce or manage it can help you cope better.

Here are some tips which may help you manage your anxiety:

- **Do things that you like and find relaxing.** This might be something like reading, writing, playing an instrument, or listening to relaxing music.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat a healthy diet. Get enough sleep.
- **Be physically active.** Take a short walk. Do some simple stretches. Moving can help ease aches and pains.
- **Pay attention to what triggers your anxiety.** Once you know your triggers, you can try to plan ahead to help manage your feelings.
- **Express your feelings.** Try writing down how you are feeling, or talk with someone you trust. Some people find a support group helpful.
- **Think about talking to a professional therapist.** He or she may help you better understand your anxiety and help you manage it.

If your anxiety:

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

Talk to your doctor or nurse. There are various resources and different health professionals who can help you. You may also be interested in online resources.

Your doctor or nurse can also provide support to you. If you feel you need more help you can call:

- Halifax: 902-240-8129 (Psychosocial Oncology at the QEII Cancer Care Program)
- Sydney: 902-567-8551 (Social Work at the Cape Breton Cancer Centre)
- All other areas: 1-866-524-1234 to access your Cancer Patient Navigator

Canadian Cancer Society

The Cancer Information Helpline is a service for people with cancer, their caregivers, their families and their friends and healthcare professionals. Information specialists provide answers to caller's questions and provide information about:

- Cancer treatment and side effects
- Coping with cancer
- Emotional support services
- Help in the community

Individuals can call toll-free at 1-888-939-3333 to talk with an Information Specialist.

Wellspring Online Programs

Free downloadable programs, interactive group programs, self-paced informational webinars, <https://wellspring.ca/online-programs/>

As well, you may want to contact:**NS Health Mental Health and Addictions Intake Service**

The Intake team will engage patients in a brief screening process on the telephone and connect them with the service that best meets their needs. Contact: 1-855-922-1122 –Monday-Friday 8:30-4:30. Visit the website which has a great deal of helpful information - <https://mha.nshealth.ca/en>

Provincial Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Line

This service is for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis or anyone concerned about them. Available 24 hours a day/7 days a week. 1-888-429-8167

Looking for more health information?

Find this brochure and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/cancer>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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Nova Scotia Health
www.nshealth.ca

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider. The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.