

Studies show that about half of all cancer patients say they feel some sort of anxiety and about one-fourth report feeling a great deal of anxiety. Nervousness and fear is a common reaction to a stressful life-changing event like cancer. Generally, we can manage feeling nervous before a doctor's appointment or waiting for test results. Oftentimes, the fears associated with worrying about a medical procedure or financial pressures associated with treatment can be daunting, but they generally do not stop people from going about their everyday activities.

If you are concerned that you find you are nervous and afraid to the point that it is affecting your ability to enjoy your life, talk to your doctor, nurse, or social worker for help. Some fear and anxiety are a normal reaction to being under stress and facing a serious illness. Chances are this is a short-term problem that will resolve itself as you begin to feel better. However, extreme or prolonged nervousness and fear can lead to a more serious anxiety disorder that can affect your ability to participate actively in your treatment and can have an affect on a healthy outcome.

## **WHAT SYMPTOMS MAY INDICATE THAT I MAY NEED HELP WITH FEELING NERVOUS OR AFRAID<sup>1</sup>:**

- Feeling worried all the time
- Not being able to focus
- Not being able to “turn off thoughts” most of the time
- Trouble sleeping most nights
- Frequent crying spells
- Feeling afraid most of the time
- Having symptoms such as fast heartbeat, dry mouth, shaky hands, restlessness, or feeling on edge
- Anxiety that is not relieved by the usual ways to lessen anxiety such as distraction by staying busy

## **WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MANAGE FEAR AND NERVOUSNESS?**

- It's normal to feel nervous and afraid in the face of a stressful experience like cancer. Allow yourself to experience these feelings without feeling like you are out of control. This is a normal part of the emotional healing through a difficult experience.



[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)  
1-888-793-9355



- Talk with your family, friends, doctor, nurse, or oncology social worker about what you are feeling.
- Find ways to relax such as meditation, yoga, or breathing exercises.
- Join a support group to hear how other people are managing feelings of fear and nervousness.
- Seek professional help from a therapist experienced in working with cancer patients. Talk therapy is often the best way to manage extreme fear or anxiety.
- Talk with your physician or therapist about medication that can ease anxiety.
- Use humor — find something to laugh about every day.
- Consider prayer. For many people, prayer is a useful tool in managing the roller coaster of emotions.
- Keep a journal to record and release your feelings.

<sup>1</sup> From the National Cancer Institute, Adjustment to Cancer, Anxiety and Distress PDQ, 2014

# General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

**Cancer Support Community** • 888-793-9355 • [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)

**American Cancer Society** • 800-227-2345 • [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**CancerCare** • 800-813-4673 • [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

**Cancer.net** • 888-651-3038 • [www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net)

**Caregiver Action Network** • 855-227-3640 • [www.caregiveraction.org](http://www.caregiveraction.org)

**Healthcare.gov** • [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)

**Livestrong Foundation** • 866-673-7205 • [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org)

**National Cancer Institute** • 800-422-6237 • [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

**National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine** • 888-644-6226 • [www.nccam.nih.gov](http://www.nccam.nih.gov)

**Patient Advocate Foundation** • 800-532-5274 • [www.patientadvocate.org](http://www.patientadvocate.org)

## CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The Cancer Support Community's (CSC) resources and programs are available free of charge. Call 888-793-9355 or visit [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org) for more info.

**Cancer Support Helpline**<sup>®</sup>—Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (888-793-9355), available in 200 languages Mon–Fri, 9 am–9 pm ET.

**Open to Options**<sup>®</sup>—Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling 888-793-9355 or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

**Frankly Speaking About Cancer**<sup>®</sup>—Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs.

[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer).

**Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs**—With the help of 170 locations, CSC and Gilda's Club affiliates provide services free of charge to people touched by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation).

**MyLifeLine**—CSC's private, online community allows patients and caregivers to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Sign up at [www.MyLifeLine.org](http://www.MyLifeLine.org).

**Grassroots Network**—Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate).

**Cancer Experience Registry**<sup>®</sup>—Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at [www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org](http://www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org).

The Cancer Support Community provides this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.

© April 2020. Cancer Support Community. All rights reserved.