

Teenagers with a relative or friend with cancer

This leaflet has been written for teenagers who have a relative or friend with cancer. It is estimated that nearly half of all teenagers have a family member with cancer; you are not alone and there are many sources of help and information available, both online and from local and national organisations.

Coping with how you are feeling

When someone in your family has cancer, things can change for everyone. You may find people in your family react differently and have different ways of coping. You may feel scared, angry, guilty, lonely, neglected, embarrassed, anxious or confused.

Remember that feelings aren't 'good' or 'bad', they are just feelings and they are normal. Many other people in your situation feel the same way. Accepting these feelings and talking about them is a good way of coping through sharing. But if you find it hard to talk, try writing down how you feel or draw a picture of your feelings instead.

Support and sharing

It can be hard to talk about cancer. You may worry that you might upset the person with cancer, or that they won't want to talk about it. You may also worry that you will find the conversation upsetting. These concerns are normal.

You may find it helpful to talk to someone else instead. Think about whether there is someone in your own 'support circle' of people to whom you can talk. These could be parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbours, teachers, school counsellors, religious leaders, youth club workers, older brothers and sisters or friends your own age. It can really help to talk.

Please see details on the next page of special organisations which may be able to help you.

Information

Worrying about cancer, its treatments and tests can be hard. Having accurate information about the type of cancer your friend or relative has and the treatment they are having can help you feel less confused and scared about what is going on.

Sometimes talking with your friend or relative about what it is really like is the best way to deal with these feelings. If they agree, it may be helpful to visit the hospital with them and talk to one of the health professionals involved in their care.

You might want to ask questions like:

- What kind of cancer is it and where is it?
- What kind of treatment will be used?
- How long will the treatment last?
- How do people feel having this treatment?
- Will they get better?
- What will happen to me while they are having treatment?
- What can I do to help?

It is a good idea to talk with someone about any information you find to check its accuracy and what applies to your friend or relative.

This information sheet has been put together by the Lynda Jackson Centre, the support and information service at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre.

If you would like any further information, including books and leaflets that may be helpful, please get in touch:

Helpline: 020 3826 2555

Mon–Fri: 9.30am–4.30pm

www.ljmc.org

Websites for teenagers

Childline	Telephone and online service where young people up to the age of 19 can talk about anything that is worrying them.	Tel: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
HOPE	Support through safe, monitored Facebook group and 1:1 online support sessions for young people aged 5–25 when someone close to them has a life-threatening illness.	Tel: 01989 566317 www.hopesupport.org.uk
Kooth	Safe and anonymous online mental wellbeing community for young people.	www.kooth.com
Osborne Trust	Emotional and practical support for children (up to 16) whose parent is undergoing cancer treatment.	www.theosbornetrust.com
Young Minds	Advice and information on what to do if you're struggling with how you feel.	www.youngminds.org.uk

Local services

The availability of many local services will depend on where you live and/or go to school. The services listed below do not require a referral from an adult; you can get in touch with them yourself.

Link London Borough of Hillingdon	The Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme (LINK Counselling) is for ages 13–24 and provides confidential and supportive one to one counselling, Yoga for Wellness and Group Therapy.	Tel: 01895 277222 Mon–Fri: 9.00am–5.30pm
Harrow Horizons London Borough of Harrow	Supports young people up to age 18 to improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing.	Tel: 0300 030 2313 www.harrow.gov.uk/childrens-social-care/harrow-horizons
Mind Hertfordshire Network Hertfordshire	Supports positive mental health and emotional wellbeing for ages 5–18. They offer online support, group sessions, drop-ins, and counselling for children and young people in Hertfordshire.	Tel: 0208 189 8400 Mon–Fri: 2.00pm–10.00pm www.withyouth.org
Signpost Dacorum Hertsmere Three Rivers Watford	Counselling service that supports children and young people aged 5–25 years across Hertfordshire.	Tel: 01923 239495 www.signpostcounselling.co.uk
Tilehouse Counselling North Hertfordshire	Service for young people aged 13–18 who are encountering emotional difficulties and feel the need to talk to someone.	Tel: 01462 440674 www.tilehouse.org
Youth Talk District of St Albans	Counselling for young people aged 13–25.	Tel: 01727 868684 www.youthtalk.org.uk

Most hospices also offer counselling services to young people who have a friend or relative with cancer. Please call the Lynda Jackson Centre (020 3826 2555) for details of your local hospice.