

Anxiety and fear

At many different times during their treatment and recovery, people with cancer may be fearful and anxious. For most people with cancer, finding out that they have cancer or that the cancer came back causes the most anxiety and fear. Fear of treatment, doctor visits and tests might also cause apprehension (the feeling that something bad is going to happen). It's normal to feel afraid. People may be afraid of uncontrolled pain, dying, or what happens after death, including what might happen to loved ones. Below are some signs and symptoms of fear and anxiety.

Symptoms of anxiety and fear

- Anxious facial expression
- Uncontrolled worry
- Trouble solving problems and focusing thoughts
- Muscle tension (the person may also look tense or tight)
- Trembling or shaking
- Restlessness, may feel keyed up or on edge
- Dry mouth
- Irritability or angry outbursts (grouchy or short-tempered)

If a person has these symptoms, and they are interfering with his or her life, a mental health evaluation may be helpful. Keep in mind that sometimes, despite having all the symptoms, a person may deny having these feelings. But if they are willing to admit that they feel distressed or uncomfortable, therapy can often help.

What to do

- Encourage, but do not force, each other to talk.
- Share feelings and fears that you or your loved one may be having.
- Listen carefully to each other's feelings. Offer support, but don't deny or discount feelings.
- Remember that it's OK to feel sad and frustrated.
- Get help through counseling and/or support groups.
- Use meditation, prayer, or other types of spiritual support if it helps.
- Try deep breathing and relaxation exercises. Close your eyes, breathe deeply, focus on each body part and relax it, start with your toes and work up to your head. When relaxed try to think of a pleasant place such as a beach in the morning or a sunny field on a spring day.
- Talk with a doctor about using anti-anxiety or anti-depressant medicines.

Do not

- Keep feelings inside.
- Force someone to talk if they are not ready to.
- Blame yourself or another person for feeling fearful or anxious.
- Try to reason with a person whose fears and anxieties are severe; instead talk with the doctor about medicines and other kinds of help.

NOTE: This document is from the American Cancer Society and is taken from www.cancer.org



Because Everyone's Journey IS Different