

How to handle a cancer diagnosis



Learning that you or someone you love has cancer can make you feel completely out of control. You may wonder why this happened to you and how you're going to get through it. With support from your loved ones and your care team, you can begin to feel more in control of the journey ahead. Remaining hopeful, understanding your condition and having an active role in the decisions that affect your care are the best places to start.

Learn about your condition

Understanding your diagnosis, and treatment plan can help you and your family face any challenge ahead. Learning more about your disease will ease your stress and help you make decisions that are best for you. Feel free to ask your care team any questions and learn more from the following resources:

1. **Cancer.Net**, monitored by the American Society of Clinical Oncology, visit: cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/cancer-basics for a definition of cancer, common terms used, staging of disease and the cancer team. Also covers diagnosis, managing care and more.
2. **Chemocare**, visit: chemocare.com/ for a drug database that we use to provide handouts on chemotherapy.
3. **American Cancer Society**, visit: cancer.org for general cancer information and support services.
4. Keep this in mind if you choose to do a general Google search about your diagnosis:
Pro: it can help answer questions and increase your understanding of your disease.
Con: it may not accurately portray your unique situation, and increase your anxiety, confusion and misunderstanding.
5. Be prepared to discuss your end-of-life goals and code status. Watch this video from the **American College of Physicians** to learn about a full code, Do Not Resuscitate (DNR), or other combination: youtube.com/watch?v=skzAGEf9bv8

Take advantage of support groups

Joining a support group with others who are going through a similar experience may help you learn about other resources, make new friends and possibly help someone cope better with their condition by sharing your story. Some supportive services and groups include:

1. **Bloch Cancer Hot Line:** A program of the RA Bloch Cancer Foundation for people with cancer and their families. Call toll-free to speak with a survivor of your cancer type: **800-433-0464**.
2. **Cancer Action:** A community-based nonprofit agency offering programs and services addressing the physical, social, emotional, financial and spiritual needs of people with cancer, their family and friends: **816-350-8881**.
3. **Gilda's Club Kansas City:** An affiliate of the Cancer Support Community, dedicated to providing, at no cost to members, a comprehensive and professional program of emotional support and education designed to enhance the mind, body and spirit of people whose lives have been impacted by cancer **816-531-5444**.

Document your journey

It's a good idea to keep a notebook or folder for your medical records, information about your diagnosis and notes from your providers. You may feel too upset while at the hospital or doctor's office to remember anything. Keeping your records and notes handy will help you stay informed.