

Feeling Sad or Depressed

People with cancer and their family members are under a great deal of pressure to cope effectively with the treatments, side effects, and anxieties that may accompany a diagnosis of cancer. Every single patient, at every stage of cancer, regardless of the type of treatment, deals with issues that cause some level of distress, ranging from common feelings of vulnerability, sadness, and fear of recurrence or death, to problems that are more disabling, such as clinical depression, intense anxiety, or panic. While many emotions fade over time, some may develop into depression. Having cancer does not mean that you should expect or accept feeling depressed all the time.

Overwhelming sadness or depression can affect your ability to carry out daily activities and to participate actively in your treatment. It can also make physical symptoms more severe, or even impact the treatment outcome. People's reactions will differ and will probably vary over time, but please know that you are not alone. It is important to talk about feeling sad or depressed with a family member, friend, clergy, and/or health care professional.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION¹:

- Ongoing sad, anxious, or empty feelings
- Feeling hopeless or feeling guilty, worthless, or helpless
- Feeling irritable or restless
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once enjoyable, including sex
- Feeling tired all the time
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, or making decisions
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, or sleeping all the time
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Thoughts of death and suicide or suicide attempts
- Ongoing aches and pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems that do not ease with treatment

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MANAGE SADNESS AND/OR DEPRESSION?

- Talk with your family, friends, doctor, nurse, clergy, and/or oncology social worker about what you are feeling. Don't wait until you are so depressed that you find you cannot function in your daily life.



www.CancerSupportCommunity.org
1-888-793-9355



- There are medications that may be helpful even while you are undergoing cancer treatment.
- Join a support group to hear how other people are managing their emotions.
- Seek professional help from a therapist experienced in working with cancer patients.
- Use humor — find something to laugh about every day.
- Many people have shared that prayer is a useful tool in managing the roller coaster of emotions.
- Keep a journal to record and release your feelings.

¹ From the National Institute of Mental Health, Depression and Cancer, 2014

General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

Cancer Support Community • 888-793-9355 • www.CancerSupportCommunity.org

American Cancer Society • 800-227-2345 • www.cancer.org

CancerCare • 800-813-4673 • www.cancercare.org

Cancer.net • 888-651-3038 • www.cancer.net

Caregiver Action Network • 855-227-3640 • www.caregiveraction.org

Healthcare.gov • www.healthcare.gov

Livestrong Foundation • 866-673-7205 • www.livestrong.org

National Cancer Institute • 800-422-6237 • www.cancer.gov

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine • 888-644-6226 • www.nccam.nih.gov

Patient Advocate Foundation • 800-532-5274 • 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 for more info.

Cancer Support Helpline®—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®—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®—Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs.

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.

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.

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.

Cancer Experience Registry®—Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at 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.