

Talking with Your Teen about a Cancer Diagnosis

- Let them know that you are doing everything in your power to get better.
- It is okay if you cannot answer one of their questions. Let your teen know you will try to find an answer and get back to them later.
- Let your teen know that they can talk to you about anything and you will listen to what they say.
- If your teen does not want to talk, they can always talk to you another time.
- Your teen may not want to talk much about the cancer diagnosis. Keep them informed about the basics of what is happening with your cancer, treatment, and its side effects, and have further conversation when they would like to hear more.
- Ask your teen if they would like to talk with a counsellor or someone else that may be able to support them.
- Take a break from talking about cancer. Take some time to do something fun.
- Try to keep your teen's routine as normal as possible.
- Your teen may not want to tell their friends and they might not know what to say to them. It is important for them to establish their own boundaries and let their friends know what they are and are not comfortable talking about.
- Normalize emotions. If your child is sad or mad about the diagnosis, reassure them that these are normal reactions and you experience them too (if this is true).

Online resources

- **Facts4Teens** is a BC Cancer web page for teens. It has cancer facts and information on how to manage when cancer comes to the family. www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/facts-4-teens
- **Getting Through: a guide for middle and high school students when cancer affects the family.** You can find it on this page: www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer/talking-to-my-family/children-teens
- **Scribble & Paste: A Creative Journal if Cancer Comes to Your Family.** You can download excerpts here: www.bccancer.bc.ca/coping-and-support-site/Documents/Scribblepaste.pdf. Ask for a free copy from your local Patient & Family Counselling.
- **When your parent has cancer: a guide for teens** is a booklet by the National Cancer Institute. www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/When-Your-Parent-Has-Cancer.pdf
- **Mindshift App** designed to help teens and young adults cope with anxiety. www.anxietybc.com/resources/mindshift-app