

## Telling your child you have cancer

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Here at the Juravinski Cancer Centre (JCC), we can help and support you with telling your child that you have cancer. Please talk with your oncologist and nurse about concerns you may have about your child's reaction to you having cancer. They can refer you to a social worker in Supportive Care.

You can also call Supportive Care directly to meet with a social worker.

Supportive Care  
905-387-9711 ext. 64315  
9:00 am to 5:00 pm  
Monday through Friday

## What you may notice about your child

Having cancer affects all members of a family. Very young children to teens may feel something is different or has changed in their family. You may feel that your child is acting differently.

What you may notice about your child:

- crying more
- trouble sleeping or eating
- problems with school, homework and friends
- more emotional
- more quiet and withdrawn

## Suggestions

It may be hard for you to discuss with your child that you have cancer. You know your child best. When you decide to tell your child, choose a time when you both are calm. Try to set some time aside when you are not feeling rushed. Some common fears that children may have are:

- their parent will die from the cancer
- something they did caused the cancer
- who will take care of them

You may be worried about how to answer questions. Be clear and direct. We encourage you to be honest. You may find that you have to tell your child over and over again that you have cancer. Ask them how they are feeling. Discuss your feelings too.

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## Resources

There are many resources on talking with your child or teen about cancer available in our Patient and Family Resource Centre. It is located on the main level of the JCC near the front entrance.

Phone: 905-387-9495, ext. 65109  
Email: [jccpfrcentre@jcc.hhsc.ca](mailto:jccpfrcentre@jcc.hhsc.ca)  
Website: [www.jcc.hhsc.ca/](http://www.jcc.hhsc.ca/)

These websites are also a good place to start:

- Canadian Cancer Society  
<http://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-journey/talking-about-cancer/telling-children/?region=on>
  - National Cancer Institute  
<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/When-Your-Parent-Has-Cancer.pdf>
  - We Are MacMillan Cancer Support  
<http://www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/Livingwithandaftercancer/Relationshipscommunication/Talkingtochildren/Talkingtochildren.aspx>
  - Cancer Research UK  
<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/cancer-help/coping-with-cancer/coping-emotionally/talking-about-cancer/talking-to-children>
  - Cancer.Net  
<http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/communicating-loved-ones/talking-about-cancer/talking-your-children>
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**Juravinski Cancer Centre**  
699 Concession Street  
Hamilton, Ontario L8V 5C2  
905-387-9495

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