

Telling your child you have cancer

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 or nurse about concerns you may have about your child's reaction to you having cancer. They can refer you to the Child Life Specialist in Supportive Care.

You can also call Supportive Care directly to meet with the Child Life Specialist or a social worker.

Supportive Care

Hours: 8:30 AM - 4:30, Monday - Friday

Phone: 905-387-9711 ext. 64315

Website: <https://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/areas-of-care/cancer-care/cancer-services/psychosocial-oncology-program/>



To access the website open your smartphone or tablet's camera or QR code reader app, focus it on the black square and select the link.

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 or friends
- more emotional, quiet or withdrawn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 are both 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.

Resources

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

Phone: 905-387-9495, ext. 65109

Email: jccprcentre@hhsc.ca

Website: <https://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca/areas-of-care/cancer-care/patient-family-resource-centre/>



These websites are also a good place to start:

- Canadian Cancer Society
<https://www.cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/living-with-cancer/talking-about-cancer/talking-to-children-about-cancer/?region=on>
- Cancer.Net
<http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/communicating-loved-ones/talking-about-cancer/talking-your-children>
- Cancer Research UK
<https://about-cancer.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/coping/emotionally/talking-about-cancer/talking-to-children>



- MacMillan Cancer Support
<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/diagnosis/talking-about-cancer/talking-to-children-and-teenagers>
- National Cancer Institute
<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/adjusting-to-cancer/talk-to-children>
- Wellspring
https://wellspring.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/familypgm_parent_onlinebooklet_FINAL.pdf

