



Gloucestershire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Feelings after cancer treatment

How you might feel after treatment

When cancer treatment ends, it is common to experience a wide range of emotions. These feelings may be different from what you expected.

Some people imagine they will feel happy and relieved once treatment has finished and some do, but it is also completely normal to feel the opposite. There is no right or wrong way to feel after treatment.

Common thoughts and feelings people have:

Your emotions may change over time. You might feel relieved, glad or hopeful.

- “Going through cancer treatment has given me a different perspective on what matters in life”
- “It felt like a relief to come to the end of treatment”
- “I do not sweat the small stuff anymore”

You might also feel anxious, sad, angry, guilty or uncertain. All of these feelings are normal.

- “I thought I would feel happier.”
- “Why do I not feel happy?”
- “I am finding it hard to remember who I am.”
- “I do not feel like the same person anymore.”
- “I was desperate for life to go back to normal.”
- “Waiting for my first scan after treatment was really hard.”

- “I felt guilty because I did not feel happy when my treatment ended.”
- “Finishing treatment felt like falling off a cliff. All the clinicians involved in my care who I saw regularly were suddenly gone. I felt lonely and isolated as these were the people who really understood.”

You may not want to talk about these feelings because you do not want to seem ungrateful, but they are very common. Feeling this way does not make you selfish or ungrateful.

There is no right way to feel. Try not to put pressure on yourself to feel a certain way or to return to “normal” quickly.

Family and friends

Your family and friends may feel relieved or happy, and they might expect you to feel the same. Their reactions usually come from care and concern and a hope that things will return to ‘normal’. We know that it is not as straightforward as that.

If you feel able, try to let them know how you are really feeling. Being open can help them understand your experience and support you in the way you need.

Fear of cancer coming back

It is very common to worry about cancer returning after treatment. This is part of our survival instinct as human beings. Around 9 in 10 people experience these worries

after treatment, so you are not alone. For many people, these fears become easier to manage over time.

For others, the thoughts can feel overwhelming and may start to affect daily life. Getting support can make a real difference. Being able to talk about fears of cancer returning has helped patients to feel “more acceptance that how I feel is ‘normal’” and as though “a heavy burden has been lifted off my shoulders”.

The Macmillan Next Steps Cancer Rehabilitation Team, together with the Cancer Psychology Service, offer a course called Fear of Cancer Recurrence. This course provides tools and strategies to help you understand and manage these worries.

If you feel this course might be helpful, speak to your Clinical Nurse Specialist or contact Macmillan Next Steps. Their details are listed at the end of this leaflet.

When to get support

You may want to ask for help if:

- Your worries are causing a lot of distress
- Your thoughts are affecting your sleep, mood or daily activities
- You feel unable to enjoy life in the way you would like to

You can speak to a healthcare professional involved in your care. They can listen to your concerns and, if needed, refer you for additional support.

You can also contact the organisations listed below for further help, support and information.

Macmillan Next Steps

Tel: 0300 421 6586

Website: www.ghc.nhs.uk/our-teams-and-services/macmillan/

Maggie's (Cheltenham)

Tel: 01242 250611

Website: www.maggiescentres.org

Website: [https://mission-remission.com/](http://mission-remission.com/)

Shine Cancer Support

Tel: 07804 479413

Website: <https://shinecancersupport.org/>

Charlies (Gloucester)

Tel: 01452 939000

Website: www.charlies.org.uk

Longfield Community Hospice (Minchinhampton)

Tel: 01453 733706

Website: www.longfields.org.uk

Great Oaks Hospice (Coleford)

Tel: 01594 811910

Website: www.great-oaks.org.uk

Penny Brohn UK

Tel: 0303 3000 118

Website: www.pennybrohn.org.uk

Cancer Research UK

Tel: 0300 123 1022

Website: www.cancerresearchuk.org

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your clinical team to discuss.

This leaflet has been written by:

Cancer Psychology Service

Beacon House

Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Great Western Road

Gloucester

GL1 3NN

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Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.

Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation.

***Ask 3 Questions** is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial.

Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>



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