

World Cancer Day: These are the things you can do to help someone with cancer

Sunday February 4, is World Cancer Day, a day where people come together and unite in the fight against cancer.

Being told you have cancer can be a very difficult time for anyone and getting the right support is incredibly important. Over the past year, we have seen more people than ever before, coming to HealthUnlocked looking for support and to connect with other people with cancer. We had a record 38,000 of posts that directly mention the word 'cancer' on HealthUnlocked, with thousands more talking around the subject.

Following a cancer diagnosis, friends and family often say they do not know what to do and say to someone diagnosed or living with any kind of cancer.

So what can you do to help someone with cancer?

We asked nine charity and non profit organisations for their advice.

1. **Don't wait to be asked to help:** People with cancer can be so overwhelmed, that reaching out to you about something they need is just another task to remember. If you know the person, try to think about their life and needs, and offer concrete ways and times that you can step in for them, whether it's making meals, taking care of their lawn, driving their children to after school activities, or offering to accompany them to appointments. *Ivis Febus-Sampayo, Senior Director of Programs: SHARE Cancer Support*
2. **Be a support buddy:** Coping with a cancer diagnosis can be a very difficult and uncertain time. It is a huge challenge for the person, and also the family and friends. Being a support buddy that the person can talk to, can make a big difference and ease some of the uncertainty a person is likely feeling. *Kay Drew, Buddy Coordinator, Leukaemia Care.*
3. **Find something not related to cancer to do:** Ask them if they want to do something enjoyable, that could be getting a manicure, or catching up over a coffee – anything to provide a moment that's about who they are beyond the cancer. Only the person can tell you what they need and what would help, so ask them! *Anna Hudson, Support Service Manager, Ovacome*
4. **Be yourself, don't change who you are:** Help people with cancer in the same way that you help people without cancer. The best help you can offer is to listen and respond to what the person needs. *Darryl Mitteldorf, Malecare*
5. **Be another pair of ears during a consultation:** Getting a cancer diagnosis can be a shock to both you and your partner or friend. Be there for them so that you too can hear first-hand the information the doctor is giving to them. This is likely to be a very difficult time, and information given at this time may be a bit of a blur and easily be forgotten. It may be useful to take notes so that you have both got something to reflect back on after the consultation has finished. *The Eve Appeal*
6. **Be there with emotional support:** Being told you have cancer can leave the person apprehensive and even fearful. People need support to talk through options and choices available to them. This support and advice and strength will help ensure they are in the best position possible. *Joel Nowak, ADD ORG*

7. **Get involved with a patient advocacy organization:** volunteer or join an organisation or charity and help raise funds for research to improve the lives of people with cancer. Both survivors and caregivers tell us that they find value in advocacy and volunteer work. Cancer, especially lung cancer, is a devastating disease and being able to give back and help others can bring meaning and value to the experience with cancer. *Peggy Bezruki, Free to Breathe*
8. **Talk through any questions:** Some people with cancer can find it difficult to ask any questions they have. Offer to talk through their questions, discuss their goals and preferences before they go to an appointment. This can help people engage in decision making and making sure they get the best, most personalized treatment. Knowledge can help them to feel empowered. *Patient Empowerment Network*
9. **Support them to get a second opinion:** Primary liver cancer is the second most common cause of cancer deaths worldwide. Since the liver cannot feel pain, patients are often diagnosed in the late stages of the disease where the only options are palliative drugs that extend life but provide no cure. If you know someone diagnosed with primary liver cancer, you can help them seek a second opinion as well as researching clinical trials immediately. *Andrea J. Wilson, President & Founder, Blue Faery: The Adrienne Wilson Liver Cancer Association*

For more information on cancer and support visit [HealthUnlocked](#).

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Notes to editors:

About HealthUnlocked

The [HealthUnlocked](#) platform is a popular social network, with growing numbers of users and traffic each month. It is the second largest private health website in the UK, and in the top 20 globally.

HealthUnlocked uses technology and AI to connect and bring people together with the same health conditions, where they share experiences and answer each other's questions on the disease or condition.

HealthUnlocked provides 700 online health and wellbeing communities, across more than 200 different health conditions.