

Living with Pancreatic Cancer

A Quick Guide

Contents

This is a brief summary of 'Living with pancreatic cancer' from our website. You will find more detailed information on there. In this information there are sections on

- Coping with pancreatic cancer
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You can view this information in a larger print on our website.

Coping with pancreatic cancer

It can be very difficult coping with a diagnosis of cancer, both practically and emotionally. At first, you are likely to feel very upset, frightened and confused.

How the cancer might affect you physically

Pancreatic cancer and its treatment may cause physical changes in your body. You may have jaundice and may lose weight. You may also have to cope with feeling very tired and lacking in energy a lot of the time. Tiredness may be worse during and immediately after treatment, or if your cancer is advanced. These changes can be very difficult to cope with and may affect the way you feel about yourself. Give yourself time to adjust. You can get help and advice from your doctor or specialist nurse about treatment and how to cope.

Managing practically

As well as coping with the fear and anxiety that a diagnosis of cancer brings, you have to work out how to manage practically. There may be money matters to sort out. Who do you tell that you have cancer? There may be children to think about.

It may take some time to deal with each issue. Do ask for help if you need it. Your doctor or specialist cancer nurse can put you in touch with people specially trained in supporting those with cancer. Our coping with cancer section on our website contains lots of information you may find helpful. There are sections about your feelings, talking to people about cancer, how to help yourself, who else can help you, sex and sexuality, and financial matters.

Diet and pancreatic cancer

Having cancer of the pancreas will affect your eating and drinking habits, whatever your stage or treatment. The pancreas is not only close to the stomach and bowel, it produces insulin and enzymes which help to digest food.

After surgery, you may have digestive problems, such as diarrhoea. If you've had all or part of your pancreas removed, you may need to take insulin or tablets to regulate your blood sugar. You may also need to take enzyme supplements when you eat to help your digestion.

Before you leave hospital you should see a dietician, who will give you a diet plan to suit you. If you are on insulin or tablets to regulate your blood sugar, your doctor will also ask you to check the sugar levels in your urine or blood.

You may find it easier to have lots of small meals, rather than sticking to 3 meals a day. If you are finding it hard to eat, there are plenty of diet supplements available on prescription. If you are having problems with diarrhoea after pancreatic surgery, avoid very high fibre foods (such as cereal and dried fruit). Tell your doctor or nurse. You may need some medicines to control your symptoms. And if you are taking enzyme supplements, your dietician may need to alter the dose.

What to ask your doctor about living with pancreatic cancer

- How will my treatment affect me?
- Will I ever get back to normal, or will I have some long term effects?
- Will I be able to eat and drink normally?
- Will I need a special diet?
- Will I need to take enzyme supplements?
- How can I see a dietician?
- Will I be able to go back to work?
- Where can I get help with claiming benefits and grants?
- What practical help is available?

- Why did this happen to me?
- Are my children at risk of getting cancer of the pancreas?
- Where can I get help dealing with my feelings?
- Can you refer me for counselling?
- Do I have to pay for counselling?
- Could you refer me to a specialist cancer nurse?

Pancreatic cancer organisations

Cancer Research UK

Website: www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/
Cancer Information Nurses phone: 0808 800 4040

Pancreatic Cancer UK

Phone: 020 3535 7099 for support and information
Email: support@pancreaticcancer.org.uk for support and information
Website: www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk

Pancreatic Cancer Action

Website: www.pancreaticcanceraction.org

Diabetes UK

Phone: 020 7424 1000
Website: www.diabetes.org.uk
Email: info@diabetes.org.uk

For more information, visit our website <http://www.cruk.org/about-cancer>

You will find a wide range of detailed, up to date information for people affected by cancer, including a clinical trials database that you can search for trials in the UK. Our information is based on the best current scientific evidence and reviewed regularly by leading clinicians and experts in health and social care.

For answers to your questions about cancer call our Cancer Information Nurses on 0808 800 4040 9am till 5pm Monday to Friday.

Adapted from Cancer Research UK's website in June 2014. Cancer Research UK's website is not designed to provide medical advice or professional services and is intended to be for educational use only. The information provided through Cancer Research UK's website and our nurse team is not a substitute for professional care and should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. If you have, or suspect you may have, a health problem you should consult your doctor. Copyright Cancer Research UK 2014. Cancer Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (1089464), Scotland (SC041666) and in the Isle of Man (1103)