

Fact Sheet

Being a Mum and receiving treatment for cancer

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Being diagnosed with cancer often feels overwhelming and this feeling will be even more intense if you are also a mum.

Frequently, among the first thoughts that mums have when they are diagnosed, is how the whole process is going to affect the people they love. If you have young children, it can all be about what to say to them, or how to help them understand and cope with what is happening to you.

It goes without saying that mums don't stop worrying once the kids get older, even when they are adults! 'Mum-guilt' is something that comes with the job description. Treatment for cancer can be intense and sometimes prolonged. It is usual to feel more tired while you are undergoing treatment; whether this entails surgery, chemo or radiotherapy. Understandably you will have less energy, which may mean not being able to catch up with family and doing the usual chores with children, or for children. Furthermore, the idea of cooking meals may make you nauseous or fatigued.

Most women are used to being a 'super mum' but just because you have always managed everything before, does not mean that this is expected, necessary, or even achievable while you are also coping with your cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Unfortunately, the media frequently portrays people as 'bravely fighting' cancer and 'soldiering on'. It is often people who have never experienced severe illness themselves who embrace this idea of being positive about everything. However, the very idea and pressure of needing to be positive all the time may feel overwhelming for you.

This is quite normal, just take it one day at a time; an hour at a time if need be. Your moods might resemble a roller-coaster (especially if the treatments are messing with your hormones!), so warn others that this may happen. If you get emotional it's OK, that's a price we pay for knowing love.

While you are undergoing treatment, accept help that is offered, as it eases your burden and gives you time to rest and recover.

You may be particularly concerned about talking through the diagnosis with your children. Please speak with the clinical psychologist in our team. Any of our team members would be able to provide you with details on how to make contact. We also have a brochure of the clinical psychology service on our website for your reference about any specific questions and concerns you may have in this regard.

If you need further help explaining your cancer diagnosis to your children, the Cancer Council have produced a comprehensive information booklet called [Talking to Kids About Cancer](#).

This whole treatment process will have its ups and downs, and that is perfectly OK. It is important to be kind to yourself. Ensure you freely accept any help, companionship, hugs, sweets, bubbles, or whatever else you need to nourish your heart.

We welcome further feedback on this brochure as a way of continually improving our service.

Send your feedback to:

WSLHD-Get_Involved@health.nsw.gov.au