

Talking with Children about a Loved One's Cancer



The purpose of this guide is to help patients and families find sources of information and support. This list is meant to provide links to authoritative, up-to-date information sources for patients, families, and caregivers.

The materials in this guide can be found at the Patient Education Resource Center (PERC) in the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center B2 lobby. Visit us online at: <http://www.mccancer.org/support/learning-about-cancer/education-resource-center>

Brochures, Fact Sheets

For Children and Teens

- American Cancer Society. **It Helps To Have Friends: When Mom or Dad Has Cancer.**
- Cancer Family Care. **What about Me? A Booklet for Teenage Children of Cancer Patients.**
- KidsCope. **Kemo Shark.** A printable version is available at: www.kidscope.org/
- National Cancer Institute. **When Your Parent has Cancer: A Guide for Teens.** A printable version is available on NCI publications through the NCI's publications' locator at: www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/When-Your-Parent-Has-Cancer.pdf

For Parents

- CancerCare. **Helping Children Understand Cancer: Talking to Your Kids About Your Diagnosis**
<http://www.cancercare.org/publications/49-helping-children-understand-cancer-talking-to-your-kids-about-your-diagnosis>
- CancerCare. **Helping Children When a Family Member has Cancer.**
A printable version is available at: www.cancercare.org/publications/22-helping-children-when-a-family-member-has-cancer
- Cancer Support Community. **Frankly Speaking About Cancer: What Do I Tell the Kids?**

Activity Books

- American Cancer Society. **Because....Someone I Love Has Cancer: Kids' Activity Book.**
- Livestrong. **When Someone You Know Has Cancer: An Activity Book for Families.** A printable version is available at:
https://assets-livestrong-org.s3.amazonaws.com/media/site_proxy/data/5c300d79915fa5bb590fd913d4252047d564b3a9.pdf
- Van Dernoot, Peter. **Talking with my Treehouse Friends About Cancer.**

Books

For Adults

- Collins, Leigh & Nathan Courtney. **When a Parent is Seriously Ill: Practical Tips for Helping Parents and Children.** Metairie, LA: Jewish Family Service of Greater New Orleans, 2003.
- Harpham, Wendy Schlessel. **When a Parent Has Cancer: A Guide to Caring For Your Children.** Rev. Ed. New York: Perennial Currents, 2004.
- Heiney, Sue P. et. al. **Cancer in Our Family: Helping Children Cope with a Parent's Illness.** Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 2013.
- McCue, Kathleen. **How to Help Children Through a Parent's Serious Illness.** New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2011.
- Rauch, Paula K. and Muriel, Anna C. **Raising an Emotionally Healthy Child When a Parent is Sick.** New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2006.
- Russell, Neil. **Can I Still Kiss You? Answering Children's Questions about Cancer.** Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, 2001.
- Van Dernoot, Peter. **Helping Your Children Cope with Your Cancer: A Guide for Parents and Families.** New York, NY: Hatherleigh Press, 2002.

For Kids

Ages 3-6

- Ammary, Neyal J. **In Mommy's Garden: A Book to Help Explain Cancer to Young Children.** Leighton, PA: Canyon Beach Visual Communications, 2004. The plot of the story revolves around the narration of a little girl whose mother has cancer.

- Buckley, Colleen.; Sponaugle, Kim. **Grandma Kathy Has Cancer.** Indianapolis, IN, Dog Ear Publishing, 2007. A picture book for children that draws upon real life episodes between a grandmother who has cancer and her granddaughter.
- Clark, Julie Aigner. **You are the Best Medicine.** New York, NY: Balzer & Bray, 2010. This book delivers a soothing message from a mother with cancer to her young daughter. Reassuring and tactful, it affirms that love and kindness are the best medicine for anyone who is ill.
- Filigenzi, Courtney. **Let My Colors Out.** Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 2009. This book helps children cope with the range of emotions following a parent's cancer diagnosis.
- Frahm, Amelia. **Tickles Tabitha's Cancer - Tankerous Mommy.** Hutchinson, MN: Nutcracker Publishing Company, 2001. Told through the eyes of Tabitha, a young girl, this is the story of a family in which the mother is being treated for breast cancer.
- Glader, Sue. **Nowhere Hair: Explains Cancer and Chemo to Your Kids.** Marin County, CA: Thousand Words Press, 2010. This book helps children understand chemotherapy and how cancer and hair loss are not their fault.
- Greenfield, Nancy Rueben. **When Mommy Had a Mastectomy.** Silver Spring, MD: Bartleby Press, 2005. This book helps to explain breast cancer and mastectomy simply and sensitively for the very young child.
- Lewis, Alaric. **When Someone You Love Has Cancer: A Guide to Help Kids Cope.** St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press, 2005. This book uses child-friendly language and illustrations to explain what cancer is.
- Makekau, Maryann. **When Your Mom Has Cancer: Helping Children Cope at Home and Beyond.** Makekau, 2010. This book is an excellent resource to help explain breast cancer to their children in such a way that they not only understand cancer but can also approach the subject with less fear and anxiety.
- Makekau, Maryann. **When Your Teacher Has Cancer: Coping in the Classroom and Beyond.** Makekau, 2009. This book explains to a young child what cancer is and what is happening while their teacher is being treated.
- Moore-Mallinos, Jennifer. **Mom Has Cancer!** Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 2008. This book focuses on a young boy's anxiety prior to learning his mother's cancer diagnosis and his ability to adapt once provided with honest information and reassurance.
- Nilon, Cathy. **Chemo Cat.** Edmonds, WA : Ravenna Press, 2007. This book is about a young child whose mother is going through cancer treatment and

- Perry, Hannah. **A New Hat for Mommy: Helping Children Express Their Concerns on Cancer.** Charleston, SC: BookSurge, 2005. This book is about a young girl whose mother has cancer. It asks questions along the way to encourage children to talk about their feelings in a relaxed manner.
- Schick, Eleanor. **When Mama Wore a Hat.** Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, 2007. Two children see the effects of their mother's chemotherapy after they learn she has cancer.
- Sutherland, Eileen. **Mom and the Polka-Dot Boo-Boo.** Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 2007. This book helps families talk about breast cancer, gently preparing children for what lies ahead following their mother's diagnosis.
- Thomas, Christine. **Can I Catch Cancer?** Brittany's Books, 2007. This book explains cancer in terms and illustrations a child can relate to. Gently and playfully guides the reader through the process of a cell to a tumor.
- Tinkham, Kelly A. **Hair for Mama.** New York, NY: Dial Press, 2007. When Marcus's mother has chemotherapy for her cancer and loses her hair, he tries to find new hair for her.

Ages 6-10

- Ackermann, Abigail & Adrienne. **Our Mom Has Cancer.** Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 2001. A humorous, honest, and hopeful account of the year that Abigail and Adrienne's mother underwent treatment for breast cancer.
- Borden, Louise. **Good Luck, Mrs. K.!** New York, NY: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2002. A third-grade narrator describes the class's reaction when their beloved teacher is suddenly stricken with cancer.
- Fead, Beverlye Hyman. **Nana, What's Cancer?** Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 2009. Nana answers 10 year old Tessa's questions about cancer. Nana's answers are designed to both ease children's fears and provide them with factual information.
- Matthies, Janna. **The Goodbye Cancer Garden.** Chicago, IL: Albert Whitman, 2011. This book is based on the true experiences of a family's journey through breast cancer treatment and recovery.
- McVicker, Ellen.; Hersh, Nanci. **Butterfly Kisses and Wishes on Wings : When Someone You Love Has Cancer-- A Hopeful, Helpful Book for Kids.** [S.l.: s.n.], 2006. This book is about a Mom with breast cancer. The story is told through the eyes of a child and lends itself to a simple and clear understanding of cancer.
- Ries, Lori. **Punk Wig.** Honesdone, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2008. A serious illness is given a lighthearted and encouraging treatment as a young boy relates how his mother is undergoing chemotherapy for cancer.

- Speltz, Ann. **The Year My Mother was Bald**. Washington, DC: Magination Press, 2003. An 8 year old girl keeps a journal that describes the medical treatments her mother undergoes for breast cancer, her family's experiences, and her own feelings and concerns.
- Watters, Debbie, et al. **Where's Mom's Hair? : A Family Journey through Cancer**. Toronto, Canada: Second Story Press, 2005. Provides detailed photographs to help young children understand how cancer affects people and how it is fought.
- Silver, Alex. **Our Mom is Getting Better** and **Our Dad is Getting Better**. Atlanta, Ga.: American Cancer Society, 2007. These books focus on a parent recovering from cancer. The children in the book celebrate the milestones their family has reached and reflect on the different ways their parent's illness, treatment, and recovery impacted their lives.

Pre-teens

- Chilman-Blair, Kim. **What's Up with Bridget's Mom? : Medikidz Explain Breast Cancer**. Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society, 2010. This book is in a graphic novel format.
- Clifford, Christine and Lindstrom, Jack. **Our Family Has Cancer, Too!** Duluth, MN: Pfeifer-Hamilton Publishers, 1998. The perspective of an eleven-year-old boy on his family's coping with the mother's illness.
- Hannigan, Katherine. **Ida B: and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster and (Possibly) Save the World**. New York, NY: Greenwillow Books, 2004. Ida B's idyllic childhood is idyllic is shuttered when her mother is diagnosed with breast cancer.
- Owens, Jim. **The Survivorship Net: A Parable for the Family, Friends, and Caregivers of People with Cancer**. Atlanta, GA: The American Cancer Society, 2010. This nicely illustrated book uses a parable of circus life to underscore the importance of family, friends, and caregivers in the life of every cancer patient.

Teenagers

- Cheng, Andrea. **Brushing Mom's Hair**. Wordsong, 2008. This collection of poems tells the story of a 15 year old girl during her mother's diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer.
- Gillie, Oliver. **Just the Facts: Cancer**. Heinemann Library, 2004. This book provides an overview of cancer, describing what it is, what the various forms are that it takes, what it is like to live with this disease, and some of the available treatments.

- Pennebaker, Ruth. **Both Sides Now**. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2000. A book for young adults focuses on mother-daughter relationships and how their family reinvented itself at a time of crisis.
- Silver, Maya. **My Parent Has Cancer and It Really Sucks**. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks Fire, 2013. Author Maya Silver was 15 when her mom was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2001. She and her dad, Marc, have combined their family's personal experience with advice from dozens of **medical professionals and real stories from 100 teens**.

Audiovisual Resources

- CancerCare. **Helping Children and Teens Understand When a Parent or Loved One Has Cancer** Podcast by Lori Wiener, PhD, Paula K. Rauch, MD, Cindy Moore, PhD.
Access at:
http://www.cancercare.org/connect_workshops/9-cancer-parent-or-loved-one-2011-04-20
- Cancervive. **Kids Tell Kids what it's Like when their Mother or Father Has Cancer**. Los Angeles, Calif.: Cancervive 1998.
Kids do all the talking in this 15-minute video and discuss their hopes, fears and the adult burden placed upon them when cancer strikes a parent. The film is faithful to the kid's point-of-view and encourages communication between family members.

Web Resources

- **American Cancer Society: Dealing with a Cancer Diagnosis in the Family**
<http://www.cancer.org>
 - Click on "Patients Family & Friends"
 - Scroll down and click on: "Children and Cancer"
 - Scroll down and select the appropriate document under "Dealing with a Cancer Diagnosis in the Family"
- **Cancer.Net: Communicating with Loved Ones**
<http://www.cancer.net/coping-and-emotions/communicating-loved-ones>
This site, by the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), provides information on talking to your children or grandchildren about your cancer.
- **GroupLoop**
<http://www.grouploop.org/Default.aspx>
This site for teens is offered by the Cancer Support Community and is both for teens who have cancer and those who have someone close to them diagnosed with cancer.

- **Kids Konnected**
<http://www.kidskonnected.org>
Provides understanding, education and support for kids and teens who have a parent with cancer or have lost a parent with cancer.
- **Parenting At a Challenging Time (P.A.C.T.)**
<http://www.mghpact.org/parents.parenting.php>
Provides guidance for parents facing cancer.
- **Someone I Love is Sick**
www.someoneiloveissick.com
This site is run by The Gathering Place, a non-profit committed to caring for those touched by cancer.

University of Michigan Resources

- The University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center **Families Facing Cancer Program**
<http://www.cancer.med.umich.edu/support/families-facing-cancer.shtml>
This program focuses on resources and programs for children who have a parent or other adult family member confronting cancer.

Organizations

- **Community Programs for Children and Teens Who Have a Family Member with Cancer (Michigan)**
Cancer Support Community of Greater Ann Arbor
<http://www.cancersupportannarbor.org/>
2010 Hogback Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
734.975.2500
- **Gilda's Club of Grand Rapids**
<http://www.gildasclubgr.org/>
1806 Bridge St NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49504
616.453.8300
- **Gilda's Club of Greater Detroit**
<http://www.gildasclubdetroit.org/>
3517 Rochester Road
Royal Oak, MI 48073
248.577.0800

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