



Talking With Your Child About Cancer

Tell the truth.

Respond to your child's questions and concerns honestly. Establish open communication from the beginning of their treatment experience so that your child will feel comfortable asking questions and sharing feelings.

Provide information based on your child's age and emotional maturity.

Younger children will need simple explanations about their cancer and reassurance about treatment. Tell young children that the tests and medicine are there to make them feel better. Older children may want more complex explanations and information.

Take your cues from your child.

Some children may want to discuss their cancer a great deal, while others want to know very little. Provide opportunities for discussion, but don't overwhelm your child with information he/she may not want.

Reassure your child that cancer is not his/her fault.

Certainly younger children, but even older children may feel that they did something to cause their cancer, or are being punished for some wrong doing. Tell them directly that no one knows why children get cancer but it is not because of anything they did or did not do.

Keep communication open.

You may be concerned about sharing your emotions with your child throughout his/her treatment. Yet, children often know how their parents feel. Talk with your child. While you may not want to burden your child with your fears, sharing feelings with your child gives him/her permission to be open with you.

Utilize the support of health care professionals.

Your child's doctor, social worker or nurse can help you talk with your child about cancer. Sometimes it is overwhelming to think about talking with your child when you are dealing with your own emotions. Your child's health care professionals can both guide you or talk with you and your child together to discuss his/her disease and treatment.

