

Talking to others about your Oesophageal Cancer diagnosis

Discovering you have Oesophageal Cancer can be very difficult. Your journey will be as individual as you are. It can be hard to get your head around it all, so you might decide to take some time before you talk to others about your diagnosis.

You may need time to think and understand your own feelings, before speaking to others. Experiencing a mix of emotions is to be expected. Taking the time that you need to process your feelings may help you feel more in control of your diagnosis and help you cope with it your way.

When you are ready to talk to others you may find the following information useful:

When the time is right for you

Only you can decide when to tell your friends and family you have cancer. This can be an overwhelming time for you so it is important that you decide when it is the right time for you to tell others.

However, you may find comfort and support in talking to your family or friends about your diagnosis. It may be in talking to others that you start to feel less alone or that you identify that you have more questions for your doctor. You may find comfort in organising things to do with your friends and family in preparation for your next hospital or doctor's appointment.

You can plan

It will be important to think ahead about how you want to approach the conversation. You will know best but some people may react with surprise and not say anything at first, some may ask questions that you are not ready to answer yet. Think about what you can tell them, how you would like the conversation to go and when the time is right what they can do for you if they ask you how they can help.

Your spouse or partner may already know about your diagnosis. If not, you may want to tell them first. It might help you to make a list of people you want to talk to first and how you want to then deal with telling others and if you want to do this yourself or ask family or friends to do this for you. You may be waiting on test results or further information and might want to hold off telling certain people about your diagnosis until you have all this information. So, you could have a secondary list of people you want to talk to.

If you have children depending on how old they are you may want to think about how you tell them. We have another resource *Telling children about your Oesophageal Cancer diagnosis* that is informed by our patient and family members that could help you with this.

If you are in full time or part time employment you may need to let your manager or someone in HR know that you will be off work. You may want to have more information until you give them further details about how long you will be absent from work. However, they will be able to advise you on your organisations policies in this regard. You can then decide whether you would like to tell your co-workers or is there someone else that can do this for you, and you can decide when would be the most suitable time for you.

Keeping in touch with people after you have told them about your diagnosis - Decide for yourself

The coming weeks and months may be busy but there will also be times when you need to talk to others or need some extra help.

You may find it difficult to deal with a lot of people contacting you at once so;

- You may decide that one or two people, whether family or friends, will regularly update others on your progress or how you are feeling.
- You may decide that you will text or email people updates and telephone when you can.
- You may decide that you will only speak about certain topics with some people and you can decide who you feel most comfortable discussing how you are doing with.
- You might join a local support group or set up regular meetings with a counselor so you can talk through your personal concerns or issues with someone outside of your family or friendship group.

Of course, you can try all or a combination of the above options, until you find what is the best course of action for you.

You may find that when you keep family or friends updated and involved along the way, it can help ease your burden. Friends and family can support you and be there for you and each other and this can be helpful for everyone involved. There may be times when you feel different emotions and it is difficult to talk about your illness and having people around you at these difficult times can give you the strength and listening ear that you need. Equally you may need quiet time to process everything, and it is natural to ask for their understanding when you want to have time to yourself or talk about other things. You can also seek advice from your GP if you are finding it hard to cope with your diagnosis.

Help that you will need

You may not know straight away what help you will need from others. Initially you may have to wait for more information from your doctors on your treatment plan to know what help you will need. Normally you may like to do things yourself. However, it is important to remember that others will want to help you and there may be times when you need some extra help. It could be when attending hospital appointments or going for further tests. You may need some help if you have to have surgery or during your Oesophageal Cancer treatment. If you have friends or family that offer

you help you can let them know that you will ask when you know more about your treatment or you can be specific about what help you will need and what you would like to do for yourself so you feel comfortable with your decisions.

There will be times when you feel like you need to speak with others and times when you need time alone to think. Remember it is important that you have support and supportive people around you at this difficult time. If you would like to speak with someone in the Oesophageal Cancer Fund please do not hesitate to contact us. If there are some questions that your family or friends ask you that you don't feel you can answer you can always refer them to the Oesophageal Cancer Fund website or they are also welcome to contact us for further information

Contact the Oesophageal Cancer Fund:

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