

Talking to friends

Talking to your friends about cancer

When they find out you have cancer, your friends will all react in different ways. Some will be incredibly supportive, and their friendship will become very important to you, because it can be great to have someone to talk to about your feelings during this time.

Other friends may seem to be avoiding you, because they don't know what to say or how to help. Or they may feel they're intruding, and that you'll only want your family around.

It's important to let your friends know you're still the same person, and that you want to spend time with them and be part of the same social world.

Tell your friends what's new

Sometimes you may find it's easiest to communicate with friends by text or email, or sites like MySpace or Facebook, because it's less emotional or tiring for you.

You can post updates on these sites to let people know when you're going into hospital and when you're back home again. You can also use them to tell your friends you're feeling well and would really like visitors, or an outing to the shops or cinema.

When you don't want to talk about cancer

Sometimes your friends will want to talk about your cancer when it's the last thing you want to discuss, or they'll go on asking questions when you've had enough of the subject.

Tell them so. Thank them and explain that you don't want to talk about it at the moment/any more.

If one friend keeps going on about it, maybe you should convert them into a Facebook/MySpace/blog-only friend for a while.

What to tell your friends

If your friends want specific medical details about the kind of cancer you have, go to www.clicsargent.org.uk/childhoodcancer/Conditions and print copies of the page about your condition. Then you can just give them to your friends to read. If they want to know more, they can always visit our website.

If your friends are worried about intruding and think you'd rather be with your family, reassure them. You'll sometimes want a break from your family, to catch up on all the gossip, watch DVDs, go to the cinema or go shopping.

If they're worried about saying the wrong thing, reassure them that you still want to hear from them and catch up on stuff. Yes, sometimes one of your friends will say something really stupid or annoying – so what's new?

If they treat you like a superhero, try to enjoy it. Sometimes friends will go on about how much they admire you and how strong you are. If this annoys or embarrasses you, try to tell them gently, and explain that you'd much rather they treat you like they usually do.

Answering your friends' questions

How can I help?

Tell them! Don't hold back. Let them know if you want company, magazines, certain foods, CDs or just a friendly text message. If you're in hospital, ask them to visit you, bring your favourite takeaway or load some new music on your MP3 player. If you're at home but feeling very tired, ask them to do the washing up for you. After all, that's what friends are for!

Talking to friends

How do you feel? Are you frightened? Are you angry?

Tell them as much as you're comfortable with. If you'd rather not discuss something – or anything at all – say so. You don't have to give all your friends every detail of your treatment or your feelings. The most important thing is to do what's right for **you**.

However, if you find it helps to talk about your emotions, take advantage of this opportunity and unload on your friend. After all, they asked.

Why did you get it? How long will it last?

Your friends may have all kinds of questions about your condition or cancer in general. If you can answer them easily, and you're happy to, then give them whatever information you can. However, if you can't answer their questions, or simply don't want to, tell them to visit clicsargent.org.uk, where they'll find all kinds of information about cancer. Or they can contact the [CLIC Sargent Helpline](tel:08001970068) on 0800 197 0068 or helpline@clicsargent.org.uk

You can also show them copies of CLIC Sargent booklets like:

[Chemotherapy, Cakes & Cancer](#)

[Cancer...what's the score?](#)

[Fighting the big 'C'](#)

or any other books or leaflets you've found helpful.

And if you like, you can ask your CLIC Sargent Youth Worker or Social Worker if there's someone at your hospital who can visit your school and talk to your classmates about cancer.