

# HOW TO TELL FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS ABOUT YOUR CANCER DIAGNOSIS





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If you have recently been diagnosed, you will probably want to tell your trusted friends and family members fairly soon. What is the best way to share this personal information so that you can inform them and enlist their help and encouragement?

### **Pick an Opportune Moment**

Of course, each individual's response to a cancer diagnosis may be different. You may feel like keeping this to yourself for a while, until you have had a chance to sort out your own feelings. On the other hand, you may find yourself clamoring to reach out to those you love and trust immediately. When you choose to tell, you will want to pick the most appropriate time and place to share. Make it private. Reduce

distractions. Make sure you yourself are calm. Remember, not everyone may react the way you expect. Give them time to process on their own after you tell them.

### **Aim for Honesty**

You need not share all of the medical details of your diagnosis, but you want to be as honest as you can. If they ask you questions that you do not have answers for, it is OK to say that you do not know.

## Use Age-Appropriate Explanations

If you have young children, nieces, nephews, grandchildren or other youngsters in your family, you may choose to adapt the way you present the diagnosis. Children may only need basic information and assurance that you will be receiving treatment and that you are hopeful for healing. Often, children will require affirmation that they are not responsible for your cancer in any way and that you will keep them informed of your progress. Visit [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org) for more valuable resources on talking with children. You can also ask your care team about connecting to an Oncology Social Worker for additional support.

## Set Boundaries

If friends and family members continually probe for information, you may become frustrated and even exhausted. You might choose one individual to pass along the basic news and information to others, sparing you the prospect of having to repeat your news again and again.

## Consider Doing Online Updates

If you are comfortable with your computer, you can begin a private blog or web journal to track your progress. This can be a helpful personal exercise and a cathartic experience. You have the option of inviting which family and friends can view the site. Examples of websites that may

help are: [www.mylifeline.org](http://www.mylifeline.org) and [www.caringbridge.org](http://www.caringbridge.org).

However you decide to tell your family and friends about your cancer diagnosis, it is important that you do tell. Obviously, you need not broadcast to everyone you know, but you can benefit greatly from the confidence and support from those you trust. Those folks can be around to provide encouragement, support, and even practical assistance during treatment. Loving support is excellent therapy for any illness, including cancer.

