

East Kent Hospitals' Counselling and Support Services for Cancer Patients

Information and guidance for patients and carers living with cancer

Many people living with cancer, and the people who share their lives, experience physical and emotional changes which they find difficult to manage.

These difficulties can be linked to the disease itself, the treatment, or the everyday changes to life that can become necessary. Even during periods of remission, uncertainty often remains.

It is not always easy to talk about these worries, and sometimes it is hardest to share them with those who are closest to you.

What is counselling?

It is rare that we find time for ourselves, or someone who really listens to what we have to say. Counselling can offer us both.

Talking to a trained counsellor who is not personally involved can give us the space we need to untangle thoughts, feelings, and ideas, and you can turn to us at any stage; after diagnosis, during treatment, or even after treatment has finished.

The counselling service is built on experience, understanding, and trust, and has for many people been an important first step in regaining control of their lives.

How can I recognise the symptoms of anxiety/depression?

Constant worrying thoughts, dizziness, breathlessness, palpitations, irritability, sleep disruption, indigestion, diarrhoea, chest pain, loss of confidence, loss of interest, restlessness and agitation, difficulty making decisions, avoiding people/social situations.

You may have one or a few of the effects listed above. Talking to a counsellor or professional can help ease your anxiety/depression or they can refer you to a doctor if needed.



How does counselling help?

Counselling can help you to:

- make sense of your thoughts and feelings
- explore your options and find the way forward; and
- find your own strength to face the future.

Is counselling confidential?

With a few exceptions, counselling is confidential. These exceptions mostly relate to statutory disclosures required by law, or if a counsellor becomes concerned about your safety and wellbeing.

Counsellors will use sensitivity and discretion when sharing any information with the wider cancer team who are concerned with your care.

Where does counselling take place?

We offer counselling at William Harvey Hospital Ashford and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital Margate.

Counselling rooms are comfortable and quiet. We will always try to offer you an appointment time that is convenient for any other commitments you may have at the hospital.

Who will I see?

You will see a fully trained, qualified, and experienced counsellor who understands and values the importance of building a trusting relationship with you.

How long will I need counselling?

This can vary. Some people need just a few sessions, whilst others may want more time and support in counselling. Your counsellor will discuss your particular needs with you.

What support is available?

There are many support services available for patients and carers. First and foremost, your GP, clinical nurse specialist, or healthcare professional can assess your needs and may be able to offer practical advice and support.

They may recommend options such as guided self-help or exercise therapy. However, if you and your healthcare professional feel it is appropriate, there are also a range of telephone and face-to-face options also available to you.

The counselling service available through the Trust, specifically for cancer patients, is available at any point in your cancer pathway and afterwards.

Please speak to your clinical nurse specialist if you would like to be referred. They can be contacted on 01227 86 86 66.

Services available for families and carers

- GP funded counselling, please contact your GP
- Dover Counselling Service
Telephone: 01304 20 41 23
- Harmony Trust Counselling/Therapy
Telephone: 01795 66 30 50
- BACP: Find a Therapist
Web: www.bacp.co.uk
- Cruse Bereavement Care
Telephone: 08448 00 91 04
- Hospice Patient and Carers
Telephone: 01843 23 39 20
- Crossroads for Carers
Telephone: 08459 00 37 35
- Macmillan Volunteer Helpers
Telephone: 08450 95 80 00
- Macmillan Cancer Helpline
Telephone: 08088 08 00 00
- Cancer Co-ordinator Line
Telephone: 01227 86 86 66

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation