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All you need to know as you fight against cancer.

Brought to you by



**SINGAPORE  
CANCER  
SOCIETY**

Supported by



# FOREWORD



Congratulations to Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) on your Golden Jubilee!

You have played an important role, walking alongside cancer patients and their families, supporting them financially and emotionally. Those under your care know that they do not walk alone.

We are seeing more cancer cases in Singapore, as our population ages. Yet a cancer diagnosis is not necessarily a death sentence. Many forms of the disease are highly treatable, particularly in the early stages. And even if a cancer is not curable, proper medical treatment can often extend survival and improve quality of life.

I urge everyone to join in the fight against cancer. Get yourself screened regularly. If you are battling cancer, press on – know that you do not have to deal with your illness alone.

In 50 years, SCS has grown to be the largest voluntary welfare organisation that caters to cancer patients and their families from all walks of life. Thank you to the leaders, the volunteers and the donors. I look forward to SCS playing an even bigger role in future, in minimising the impact of cancer in Singapore.

**Lee Hsien Loong**  
Prime Minister  
Republic of Singapore

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## ABOUT THIS KIT

This cancer care kit provides easy-to-read medical, financial and psychosocial information to support newly diagnosed patients and their families in making informed decisions during their cancer journey.

A cancer diagnosis can be a frightening and confusing experience. Most people may grapple with different emotions such as anger, anxiety and disbelief. No two people are alike in their emotions and their way of handling it.

In addition, there is often fear of the unknown and uncertainty of what is going to happen. We hope this kit can address some of these fears and anxiety.

This kit is bought to you by Singapore Cancer Society, supported by National Cancer Centre Singapore, National University Cancer Institute, Singapore and Tan Tock Seng Hospital.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



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A special thanks to our partners for helping us to put this kit together.

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# ABOUT

## Singapore Cancer Society

At the Singapore Cancer Society (SCS), we believe life is worth living and fighting for. And no one needs to battle cancer alone. SCS together with its partners, volunteers, donors and the community, helps people in the fight against cancer through education, screening, patient services, financial and psycho-social assistance.

The Society reaches out to Singaporeans in the heartlands, schools and workplaces to minimise the impact of cancer, not just by working to reduce the incidence of cancer but by bringing a sense of normalcy back into the lives of cancer patients and their family members.



## MESSAGE

A friend, neighbour, colleague or even a loved one. With 33 Singaporeans diagnosed with cancer every day, anyone in your life can be affected by the disease.

One in three deaths in Singapore is due to cancer. The statistics might seem bleak. Yet, a cancer diagnosis is not all doom and gloom.

With early detection and intervention, a third of cancers are highly treatable. Advances in medical treatments have also raised the bar on cancer survivorship.

Having led the fight against cancer in Singapore over the past 50 years, SCS firmly believes that every life is worth living and fighting for.

Over the years, the society has reached out to cancer patients from all walks of life to help minimise the impact of the disease.

Our support also extends to their family members and caregivers. Through campaigns and free cancer screening services, we have actively raised awareness on cancer prevention and early detection.

This cancer care kit is our latest commitment to support Singaporeans who have been newly diagnosed with cancer, as well as their families and caregivers.

It contains easy-to-read medical information on the cancer diagnosis, treatment and its side effects, as well as ways to cope with the disease.

You will also find information on financial support services that can help alleviate the financial burden of cancer. For those who have emerged victorious from the cancer battle, the book offers insights into what life might be like after your cancer treatment.

Last but not least, through the inspirational anecdotes of cancer survivors, patients and their caregivers, the kit also serves as hope and encouragement to people whose lives have been touched by cancer.

Let this kit be your guide and friend as you navigate the cancer journey. No one needs to walk this cancer journey alone.

**Choo Eng Chuan**  
Chairman  
Singapore Cancer Society

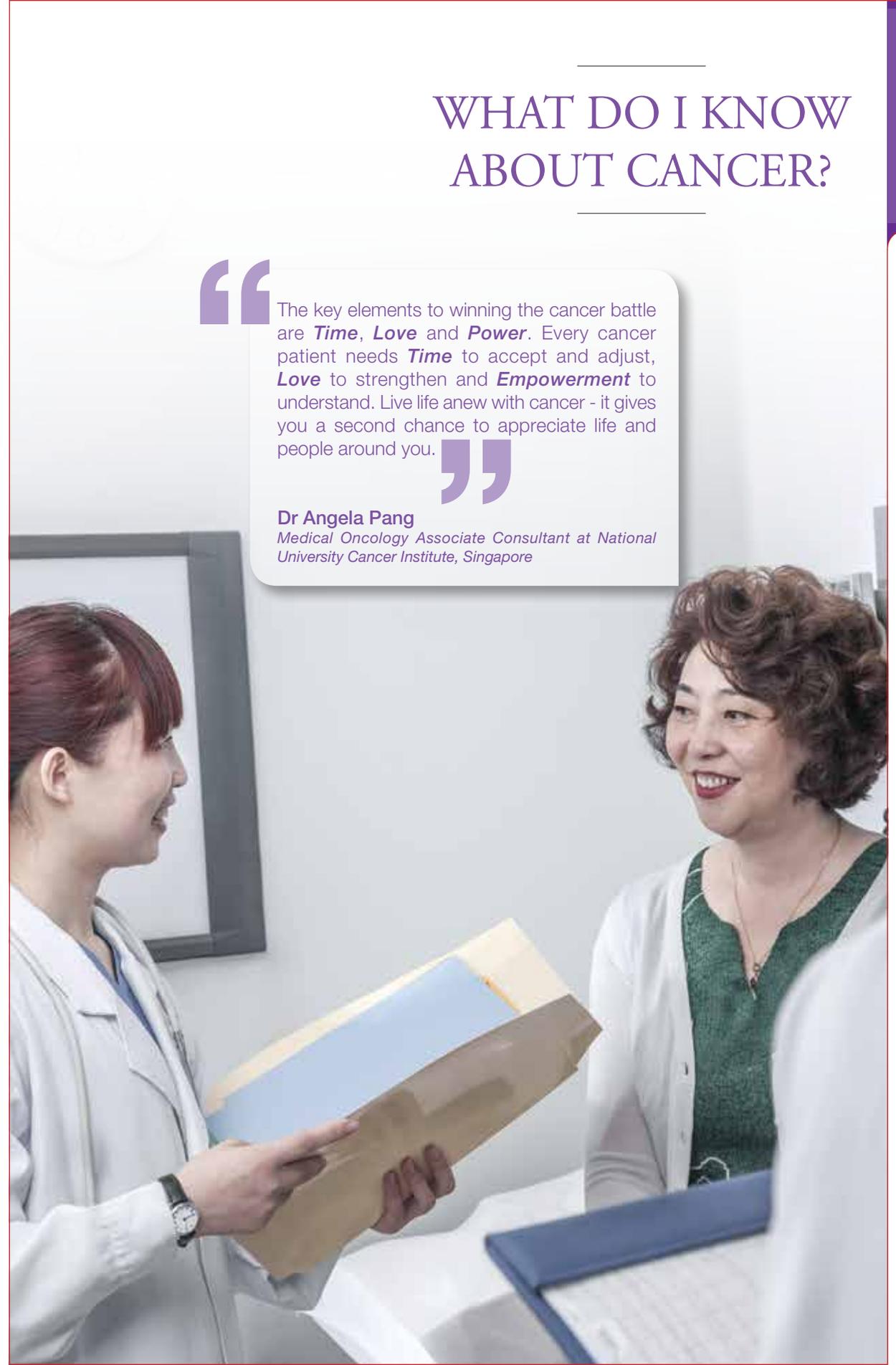


## WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT CANCER?

“The key elements to winning the cancer battle are **Time**, **Love** and **Power**. Every cancer patient needs **Time** to accept and adjust, **Love** to strengthen and **Empowerment** to understand. Live life anew with cancer - it gives you a second chance to appreciate life and people around you.”

**Dr Angela Pang**

*Medical Oncology Associate Consultant at National University Cancer Institute, Singapore*



## WHAT IS CANCER?

The term cancer refers to a group of diseases. Although there are over 100 different types of cancer, all cancers are characterised by abnormal cell growth. The disease can lead to death, if left untreated.

### 1. How cancer starts

Your body is made up of trillions of living cells. Within each cell are genes that control and direct the cell's functions.

Normal cells continuously grow and divide. Over time, they die and are replaced by new ones.

In most people, this natural cell turnover occurs in an orderly and organised manner. However, sometimes this process goes awry. Unlike normal healthy cells, cancer cells do not die. Instead, they continue to grow and divide in an uncontrollable manner. These excess rogue cells may form a mass of tissue called a tumour.

### 2. Making sense of tumours

Tumours can be benign or malignant.

Tumours that stay in one location and do not spread to other parts of the body are considered to be benign. These are not cancerous and are rarely life-threatening although they can sometimes cause problems, especially when they grow too big.

On the other hand, malignant tumours can destroy and invade other normal tissues in your body, making you very sick.

However, not all types of cancer form tumours. For instance, tumours are uncommon in leukaemia. These are cancers that typically start in the bone marrow and enter the bloodstream.

### 3. When cancer spreads

Cancer cells can spread when they migrate to other parts of the body through the blood and lymph systems, forming new tumours. This process is called metastasis.

Even when cancer spreads, it is always named based on where it first started. For instance, cancer that begins in the breast is called breast cancer. If it spreads to other parts of the body, like the liver or bone, it is called metastatic breast cancer.

With so many different cancers, it is important for you to know which type of cancer you have so that you can receive the right treatment.

## WHAT CAUSES CANCER?



### DID YOU KNOW?

One in three people in Singapore dies from cancer. You can lower your cancer risk by leading a healthy lifestyle and avoiding certain risk factors.

You might be tempted to blame a single culprit, such as genes, excessive smoking or alcohol use, for causing cancer. In reality, there isn't one exact cause of cancer.

Like many diseases, cancer can occur due to a combination of different reasons. Here are some known causes of cancer.

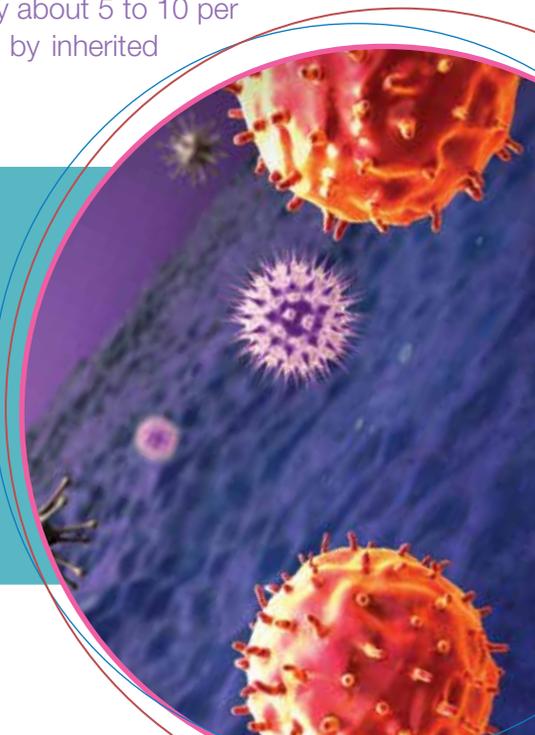
### 1. Your Genetic Makeup

If a particular type of cancer is common in your family, you could be born with genetic mutations that put you at a higher risk of developing certain cancers. Some cancers like breast and colorectal cancer tend to run in families.

Keep in mind that having an inherited genetic mutation does not mean you will definitely get cancer later in life. Only about 5 to 10 per cent of all cancers are directly caused by inherited genetic mutations.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you have a strong family history of cancer, discuss it with your doctor. Genetic testing might be useful to check if you have inherited genetic mutations that might increase your cancer risk. However, these tests are not recommended for everyone. Your doctor will be able to advise you.



## 2. Smoking

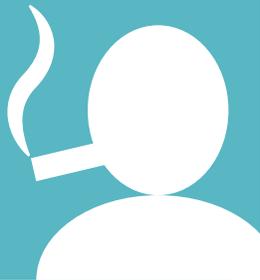
Did you know that tobacco smoke contains at least 69 various carcinogens? Smoking increases your risk of getting certain cancers such as lung and oral cancer, as well as cancers of the stomach, kidney and bladder. Any form of tobacco smoking is harmful to your health. Studies have found that even smoking just one to four cigarettes a day can lead to health problems.

Second-hand smoke is just as damaging to your health. When you light up, about 90 per cent of cigarette smoke is released into the air and becomes second-hand smoke. Even if you do not smoke, breathing in another person's smoke can increase your risk of lung cancer.



### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Stub out. If you find that quitting all at once is too daunting, consider gradually cutting down on the number of cigarettes you smoke daily. Get professional help to quit smoking, or rope in your family and friends to support you. Log on to the Quit4life website at [www.hpb.gov.sg/smokefree](http://www.hpb.gov.sg/smokefree) for further info and help.



If someone in your family or workplace smokes, encourage him or her to quit smoking. Ask him or her to avoid smoking in your presence.



Cigarette smoke not only harms you, but also **increases your loved ones' risk of lung cancer.**

## 3. Sun and UV Exposure

Most people associate a sun-kissed complexion with good health. However, frequent direct exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays - either by being out in the sun or from artificial sources like a tanning bed - can damage your skin and increase your risk of getting skin cancer.

A sunburn is your skin's response to excessive UV light. If you are fair-skinned, you are at a higher risk of skin cancer than someone with darker skin. This is because paler skin has less melanin, a pigment that protects the skin from damaging UV rays.

Singapore is one of the countries around the world with the highest UV exposure. According to the National Environment Agency, it is common for UV radiation in Singapore to reach very high to extreme levels between 11am and 3pm, on a day with little cloud cover.



### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Prevent sunburns and avoid too much sun exposure. Stay in the shade if possible. When out and about in the sun, use a sunscreen with sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 on exposed parts of your body. Wear a wide-brimmed hat and wear sunglasses with UV protection. If you are exposed to artificial sources of UV rays at work, always follow the safety regulations.

#### 4. Radiation Exposure

Every day, we are exposed to radiation, including natural forms from the earth and sun. Radiation can also come from medical imaging procedures used for X-rays and CT scans. Too much radiation exposure can potentially cause cells in the body to undergo changes. This may increase your likelihood of developing cancer.

Sometimes, an X-ray or CT scan is needed to help your doctor diagnose your medical condition. Radiation exposure from different sources can accumulate over time, but a once-off test is unlikely to increase your risk of cancer.

##### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

During these imaging tests, you can protect yourself from unnecessary radiation exposure by following the safety measures such as using a lead apron. Talk to your doctor about your concerns.



#### 5. Previous Cancer Treatments

Advances in cancer treatments like chemotherapy and radiotherapy have helped many people with cancer live longer. But they may also possibly increase your risk of another cancer in the future.

However this is quite rare. Remember that it is important to first treat the cancer you have. For some cancers, radiotherapy and chemotherapy may be the best treatment option.

##### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Talk to your doctor about your concerns. If you have completed cancer treatment, follow-up care is important.

## COMMON TYPES OF CANCER IN SINGAPORE

In Singapore, about 33 people are diagnosed with cancer every day. The good news is, with early detection and treatment, you can beat this disease.

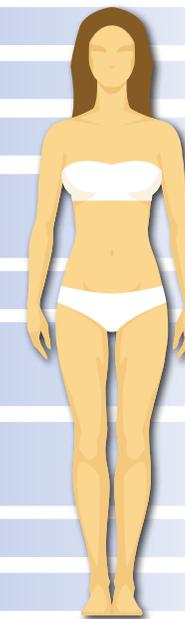
##### Men

Colo-rectum	17%
Lung	15%
Prostate	12%
Liver	7%
Lymphoid neoplasms	7%
Skin, including melanoma	6%
Stomach	5%
Nasopharynx	4%
Kidney & Other Urinary*	4%
Myeloid neoplasms	3%



##### Women

Breast	29%
Colo-rectum	13%
Lung	8%
Corpus uteri (uterus)	6%
Ovary, etc.	5%
Skin, including melanoma	4%
Lymphoid neoplasms	4%
Stomach	4%
Thyroid	4%
Cervix uteri (cervix)	3%



\* Other urinary refers to renal pelvis, ureter, urethra etc.

# Source: Singapore Cancer Registry, Interim Annual Registry Report, Trends in Cancer Incidence in Singapore, 2009-2013

## KNOW THE CANCER TERMS

Colo-rectum cancer	cancer that starts in the large intestine (colon or rectum)
Breast cancer	cancer that starts in the breast tissues. It is the most common women's cancer in Singapore
Lung cancer	cancer that starts in the lung tissues, usually in the cells lining the air passages
Liver cancer	cancer that starts in the tissues of the liver is known as primary liver cancer. Secondary liver cancer refers to cancer that has spread from other parts of the body to the liver
Prostate cancer	cancer that starts in the tissues of the prostate, which is a gland found in men. It is located below the bladder and in front of the rectum
Skin cancer	cancer that starts in the outer layers of the skin. Cancer can also form in a mole (skin melanoma)
Stomach cancer	cancer that starts in the lining of the stomach. It is also known as gastric cancer
Nasopharynx cancer	cancer that starts in the upper part of the throat and behind the nose
Kidney and other urinary cancers	cancer that starts in tissues of the kidneys, or other urinary structures like renal pelvis and urethra
Uterine cancer	cancer that starts in the inner lining of the uterus (endometrium) or outer muscle tissue lining (myometrium) of the uterus
Ovarian cancer	cancer that starts in the ovaries, which are reproductive glands found in women
Cervical cancer	cancer that starts in cervix, which is located in the neck of the womb
Thyroid cancer	cancer that starts in the thyroid gland, the butterfly-shaped gland in the front part of the neck
Lymphoid neoplasms	cancer that starts from the lymph nodes
Myeloid neoplasms	cancer that starts from the blood cells

## CANCER MYTHS DEBUNKED

Myths and misconceptions about cancer can cause you to worry unnecessarily about your health. The wrong information may even affect the way you prevent or decide to treat your illness. Here, we clear the fog on common cancer myths.



**MYTH 1** Cancer is a death sentence.

**FACT**



About a third of all cancers can be cured, if they are detected and treated early. That is why regular health checkups and screenings are important.

Today, about nine in 10 people with certain cancers, like breast, prostate and thyroid cancers, survive at least five years after their cancer is diagnosed. New cancer treatments also mean that more people with advanced cancers can live longer.




**MYTH 2** Cancer is contagious.

**FACT**


You cannot catch cancer from someone who has it. Spending time with a loved one who has cancer will not cause you to get it too. Rarely, a person who has had an organ or tissue transplantation might develop cancer, from a donor who had cancer previously.

Although cancer itself does not spread from person to person, certain viruses can increase your risk of getting cancer.

Examples of these viruses include:

**Human papillomavirus (HPV):** This is a sexually-transmitted infection that can increase your risk of getting cervical cancer.

**Hepatitis B or C:** Spread through sexual intercourse or infected needles, Hepatitis B or C infection increases your risk of getting liver cancer.


**MYTH 3** Eating sugar will make cancer grow faster.

**FACT**


Research has shown that cancer cells absorb more sugar than normal cells. But there is no scientific evidence to suggest that eating sugar or sweet foods will worsen cancer. However, a diet high in sugar can cause you to pack on excess weight and increase your risk of diabetes. People who are obese or have diabetes have a higher risk of developing certain cancers.


**MYTH 4** Bad thoughts and a negative attitude will cause me to develop or die from cancer.

**FACT**


There is no scientific evidence to show that you can increase your risk of getting cancer or die from it because of a negative attitude, or vice versa. If you have been diagnosed with cancer, you are likely to experience many different emotions. You might feel sad, angry, frightened or discouraged. When the going gets tough, a positive attitude might be able to help you cope better with your cancer diagnosis or side effects of treatment.


**MYTH 5** Surgery or a tumour biopsy will cause cancer to spread.

**FACT**


It might be possible, but the chances are extremely low. Your surgeon follows a strict set of procedures and takes steps to prevent this from happening when he or she is performing a biopsy or surgery to remove tumours.


**MYTH 6** If someone in my family has cancer, I am likely to get it too.

**FACT**


You might not necessarily get cancer although a strong family history of the disease puts you at a higher risk of developing it. Only about five to 10 per cent of cancers are caused by genetic mutations inherited from your parents. Even when that happens, it does not mean you will definitely get cancer later in life. For cancer to develop, other factors like ageing, smoking and radiation come into play too.



**MYTH 7** I am safe from cancer because no one in my family has had it.

**FACT**



About two in five people will be diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime. Cancer is caused by genetic mutations that occur within the cells. You might have inherited the gene mutation from your parents.

However, gene mutations can also occur from factors such as exposure to smoking, radiation, other cancer-causing substances and even viruses. Other risk factors like obesity and diabetes can also increase your risk of developing cancer.



**MYTH 8** I can get cancer from dyeing my hair.

**FACT**



At the moment, there is no conclusive proof that using hair dye increases cancer risk. Some studies show that people who are regularly exposed to hair dye, like hairdressers and stylists, might have a higher risk of developing cancer. However, it is not known how much hair dye use might raise this risk.



**MYTH 9** Cancer treatments will bankrupt me.

**FACT**



Besides coping with the reality of a cancer diagnosis, you may also worry about treatment costs. Fortunately, financial aid and resources are available to help you tide through this difficult period.

For more information on SCS financial help, refer to *Cancer and My Finances*.



## CANCER AND ME

“

At first, I was devastated to learn that I had prostate cancer. However, I snapped out of the negativity after joining Singapore Cancer Society's prostate cancer support group (Walnut Warrior). The survivors shared their experiences and their fighting spirit gave me hope. Not only did I receive psychological and emotional support, I also picked up practical tips on how to live and eat well through the support group activities. Now I do my part by sharing my cancer journey with newly diagnosed patients.

”

**Mr Vincent Lien**

*Retiree*

*Mr Lien was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2012, and has since undergone radiation and hormonal therapy.*



# WHAT DO I DO AFTER MY DIAGNOSIS?

The doctor has just told you that you have cancer. As you wrestle with a range of emotions including shock, dread, fear and denial, you may wonder: What should I do now?

Consider the following tips to help you cope with your cancer diagnosis.

## 1. Get your facts right

Organise your thoughts by writing down your questions before your doctor's appointment. If you wish to find out more about cancer from the Internet, be sure to countercheck information with your doctor as not all online content is reliable.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Some questions you may want to ask your doctor include:

- What type of cancer do I have and where is it located?
- Has my cancer spread?
- What further tests do I need?
- What are my treatment options?
- What is my prognosis (this refers to the chance of recovery)?



## 2. Find a doctor

Get a referral from your primary care doctor or experienced family members, friends or colleagues. You may also wish to seek a second opinion from another doctor to get more information.

## 3. Find out about the available medical treatments for your cancer

Your doctor may advise a combination of treatment methods for the best outcome. Clinical trials may also be available as one of your treatment options.

## 4. Get organised

Find an efficient way to track information such as medical appointments, laboratory tests results, treatment side effects, insurance information and finances. Create a simple filing system using folders and spreadsheets to record important information.

## 5. Find support to cope with challenges

Remember, you are not alone. Instead of isolating yourself, find support from family, friends, healthcare professionals or the community to help yourself through this challenging time.

Here are some coping tactics:

### ♥ Emotional support ♥

- **Talk about it** – Join a support group, rope in support from family and friends, talk to your cancer care team or seek professional counselling.
- **Find ways to ease stress and tension** - You could keep a journal of your treatment journey or engage in other enjoyable activities including painting, listening to music, reading or meditation.



### ♥ Practical support ♥

- **Plan ahead** – Ask your doctor what to expect during your treatment: Would I be able to continue with my normal routine and responsibilities? How much medical leave from work is expected? The information will help you to plan ahead.
- **Learn to accept help** – This is the time for you to accept hands-on help from friends and family. Help could come in the form of a simple gesture such as doing the school run or babysitting the kids when you go for your medical appointments.

### ♥ Financial support ♥

- **Work out a budget** – Ask your doctor and cancer care team about the estimated costs of cancer treatment, as well as other unexpected expenses for transportation, scans or medical accessories and devices. Knowing what to expect early can help you work out your finances more effectively.
- **Seek financial advice** – Healthcare providers, case managers or social workers can offer advice on financial options. Seek help, when in doubt. More information on the financial aspect of cancer can be found in *Cancer and My Finances*.



# WHO ARE INVOLVED IN MY TREATMENT?

Diagnosing and treating cancer often involves a team of various healthcare professionals who will ensure that you get the best possible care. Get to know the people who might be on your cancer care team.

**This is a rough guide. Depending on your type of cancer and treatment, the healthcare professionals on your cancer care team may differ.**

## 1. Doctors

Doctors who treat people with cancer are known as oncologists. During your cancer treatment, you may meet the following types of oncologists:

- **Medical Oncologist** – specialises in diagnosing and treating cancer with chemotherapy and other drugs
- **Surgeons** – specialises in using surgery to treat cancer
- **Radiation Oncologist** – specialises in using radiation to treat cancer



## 2. Nursing Team

This is the person whom your doctors are likely to work closely with during your treatment. Your nurse plays many roles - from implementing the treatment and care plan your doctor has for you, administering medications, monitoring side effects to coordinating your care process.



## 3. Social Worker

If you need help finding community resources and support services, a social worker can offer guidance. He or she can also provide counselling and emotional support.

## 4. Dieticians

This allied healthcare professional will help you make better dietary choices so that you feel better during your cancer treatment. You can also get tips on how to increase your appetite and combat symptoms like nausea and heartburn from them.



## 5. Rehabilitation Specialists

These allied healthcare professionals, including physical, occupational, speech or recreational therapists, help you to recover physically after cancer.

## 6. Palliative Care Specialists

They refer to doctors, nurses, pain specialists and other healthcare professionals who help you manage distressing symptoms of cancer, such as pain, nausea or fatigue, to improve your quality of life. A palliative care specialist can help you at any stage of cancer, from the time you are diagnosed to the end of life.

## 7. Spiritual Care Professionals

In times of illness, loss and grief, you may require more than just physical care to help you cope. A spiritual care professional provides spiritual care and support to help you discover meaning and purpose as part of the healing process, regardless of race, culture, belief system or gender.



# WHAT ARE MY TREATMENT OPTIONS?

In this section, you will learn about common cancer treatments and how they work.

Remember, there is no one-size-fits-all treatment plan for cancer. Your treatment options will depend on the type of cancer you have as well as other factors such as whether the cancer has spread, your preference, age and general health. Discuss with your doctor to find out which treatment options are suitable for you.

## 1. Surgery

Most people with cancer will undergo some form of surgery. The doctor may recommend surgery to diagnose cancer, check if the disease has spread or remove cancerous tissue.

In early-stage cancer which has not spread, surgery is usually carried out to remove the tumour. It may also be used in advanced cancers which have spread and invaded nearby organs and tissues. In these cases, only part of the tumour may be removed so as not to damage critical organs or tissues nearby. The remaining cancer is then treated with other treatment methods like radiation therapy and chemotherapy.

Sometimes, surgery is used to prevent or lower the risk of cancer from occurring in the future. For example, a person with an inherited breast cancer gene may opt for preventive surgery to remove her breasts even before cancer is found.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Recent advances in minimally-invasive surgical techniques mean that recovery time is shorter and more tolerable. Check with your doctor.



## 2. Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is the use of potent drugs to destroy cancer cells. Today, more than 100 chemotherapy drugs are available.

Most of them are administered through injections into a vein or muscle. The drugs are sometimes taken orally as a pill or liquid, placed into the spine, chest, abdomen or rubbed on the skin. Once these drugs enter your bloodstream, they damage cells that rapidly divide and grow. Cancer cells are more vulnerable to chemotherapy drugs than normal cells because of their abnormally active growth.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Chemotherapy drugs may damage normal healthy cells, causing temporary side effects like hair loss, tiredness, nausea and vomiting. Medications and other coping methods are available to help relieve the temporary side effects.



## 3. Radiation Therapy

Radiation therapy uses high-energy rays to destroy cancer cells, slow down or shrink cancer growth. Unlike chemotherapy which affects the entire body, radiation therapy is a local treatment that affects only the part of the body being treated.

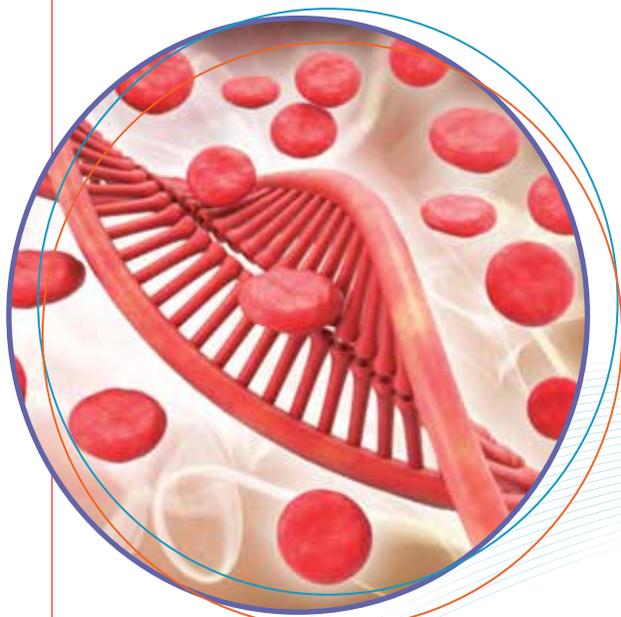
During your treatment process, high doses of radiation may affect some normal cells near the tumour. You may experience side effects such as skin changes like rashes or redness, loss of appetite or tiredness. The discomfort is temporary and usually goes away gradually once you complete treatment.

### DID YOU KNOW?

There are lifetime dose limits of radiation. During treatment, your doctor will be able to assess how much radiation you can get without causing irreversible damage. Talk to your doctor about your concerns.

#### 4. Other Cancer Therapies

- **Targeted therapy** – Unlike conventional chemotherapy, this newer generation of cancer drugs work by targeting specific mutations in cancer cells. Some of the drugs work by interrupting pathways that are involved in the growth of cancer. In the process of destroying cancer cells, they are less likely to affect normal cells.
- **Laser Therapy** – In laser therapy, a high-intensity beam of light is focused and directed at a specific area. Lasers can be used to burn away tumours or growths, as well as relieve symptoms such as bleeding. It is commonly used in the treatment of cancers that are found on the surface of the body, such as basal cell skin cancer, or when the cancer is in the early stages.
- **Stem Cell Transplant** – A stem cell transplant, also known as a bone marrow transplant, is sometimes recommended for people with certain cancers such as leukaemia, multiple myeloma and some types of lymphoma. The procedure involves replacing the damaged bone marrow (the spongy tissue inside the large bones) with healthy stem cells.



- **Immunotherapy** – Also known as biological therapy, immunotherapy makes use of the body's natural immune system to fight the cancer.
- **Photodynamic Therapy** – This treatment method involves using drugs called light-sensitive agents, along with light, to kill cancer cells. Activated only by certain types of light, the light-sensitive agent is injected into the blood stream through a vein or placed on the skin. Once the drug is absorbed by the cancer cells, light is directed at the area to destroy them.
- **Blood Product Donation and Transfusion** – People with certain cancers may experience internal bleeding, low blood count and require blood transfusions to help them temporarily replace blood. Blood transfusions are also given to people who have undergone cancer treatments that may lead to blood loss or low blood count.



## HOW CAN I COPE WITH THE SIDE EFFECTS?



Ask your doctor for advice

When you feel better, you may find it easier to cope with your cancer treatment. Ask your cancer care team for advice on ways to manage any side effects. It is also important for you to alert your doctor should you notice any new symptoms or changes in symptoms.

During cancer treatment, you may experience a variety of side effects. Manage them with these tips.

### 1. Nausea and vomiting



Anti-nausea and anti-vomiting medications may help. Nausea and vomiting are rarely life-threatening. However, repeated and prolonged bouts of vomiting can lead to dehydration, which can become a serious problem if you do not do anything about it. Seek medical attention promptly if you have trouble keeping fluids down and cannot take the medications you need.

### 2. Fatigue



Change your lifestyle and diet. For instance, you might feel better if you reduce your workload, stick to a nutritious diet, or get enough sleep, rest and light exercise (ask your doctor if exercise is safe for you). Distraction tactics like reading a book, listening to music or meditation can also help.

### 3. Pain



In most cases, cancer pain can be successfully controlled through medications. The best way to control cancer-related pain is to prevent it from developing or becoming worse. Take your pain medications as prescribed. You may also be given additional doses in the event of breakthrough pain, which refers to pain that suddenly intensifies despite treatment.

Seek medical attention promptly if you find the pain worsening or becoming unbearable. It could be an indication of a more serious condition. Your doctor may refer you to a pain management specialist.

### 4. Fertility and sexuality issues



If you are not done with family planning, talk to your doctor about your concerns before you start treatment. Some cancer treatments can affect your ability to have children. Your doctor can suggest ways to protect your fertility.

Ask your doctor if it is safe for you to continue with sexual intercourse and the safety measures you should take. You should also have an open talk about the topic with your partner. In most cases, there is usually no medical reason to stop sexual intercourse during cancer treatment.

### 5. Appetite Loss



Managing symptoms like nausea, vomiting, pain and fatigue may help to improve your appetite. Try eating several small meals packed with nutrient-dense foods throughout the day, drinking less fluids at mealtimes (this can make you feel full) and having your meals in a pleasant environment.

A dietician can also offer advice on how to plan your meals and recommend nutritional supplements if necessary.



## 6. Hair Loss



Share your feelings with a trusted family member, friend or counsellor. Consider having a shorter hairstyle before treatment starts so that the transition is less dramatic. You can also opt for hats, wigs or scarves to cover up hair loss. To learn more about practical ways to manage with the physical changes, join the Look Good and Feel Better Programme. For more details, call **6499 9132**.



## 7. Mouth Dryness



Medications to help boost saliva production and prevent oral infections are available - check with your doctor. Maintaining good oral hygiene is also important. Rinse your mouth every few hours, especially after meals, with a solution made of salt and baking soda to prevent infections. Mix one teaspoon of salt and one teaspoon of baking soda in one cup of warm water. Sip water frequently and avoid drinks that can cause dehydration like coffee and alcohol.

## 8. Constipation



Drink more fluids and do some light exercises if possible. Not being physically active can increase your risk of having constipation. Include more high-fibre foods into your diet such as whole grains, fruit, vegetables, raisins and prunes. However, a high-fibre diet may not be suitable if you have had bowel surgery or a tumour that narrows your bowel. Ask your doctor for advice. No matter how uncomfortable you feel, never use laxatives or stool softeners without getting clearance from your doctor.



# HOW CAN I COPE WITH MY EMOTIONS?

Whatever your age is, living with cancer is a life-changing experience. It might feel difficult at first, but it is possible to find peace and joy in your life once more. Here are some tips to help you cope emotionally.

### 1. Be in charge

Take charge of your illness by learning about the type of cancer you have, its treatment options, what to expect during and after treatment and how to cope. You will feel less fearful if you know what to expect in the near future.

### 2. Keep track of your feelings

Writing a journal or recording your emotions through photography, drawing, painting and music can offer comfort.

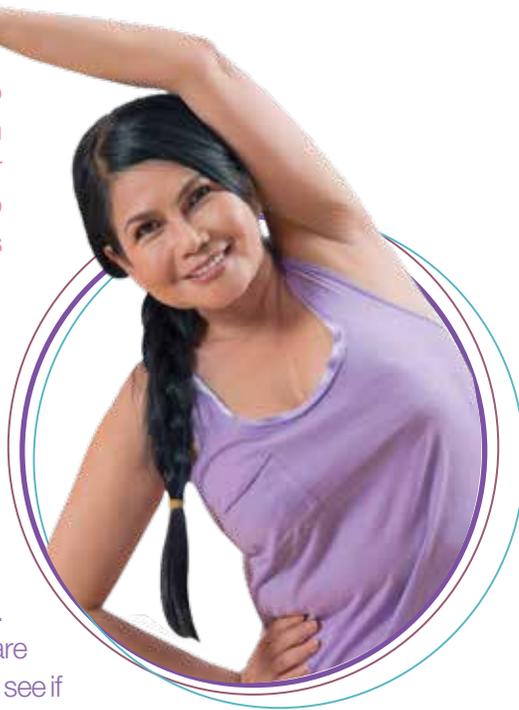
### 3. Talk about your feelings

Instead of bottling up your feelings, share your emotions with family and friends. If you find it hard to talk to people close to you, find support elsewhere. You could talk to your doctor or nurse about your feelings. They will be able to refer you to other sources of help such as a counsellor, social worker, psychologist or other healthcare professionals.



#### 4. Join a support group

Meet other patients and caregivers who are experiencing a similar situation. It can help you feel less isolated in your cancer journey. SCS provides support group programmes for cancer patients, survivors and caregivers.



#### 5. Seek spiritual support

Getting in touch with your spirituality can help you find strength and peace in times of illness and difficult circumstances.

Spiritual exercises, religious practices, reflection and meditation have been noted to be helpful for many people with cancer. Some healthcare facilities provide spiritual care support. Check with your healthcare team to see if they can refer you to a spiritual care professional.

#### 6. Give yourself private time and space

Amidst your busy treatment schedule, take time to do something you enjoy every day like listening to music, reading your favourite book, going for a slow walk in the park or engaging in some light exercise. Be sure to check with your doctor before starting any exercise programme.



## CANCER AND MY FAMILY

“

I was studying in Boston when I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. My family came all the way to my side of the world to make sure I felt at home during my operation and cancer treatment. My mother cooked and my sisters took turns to take time off work to visit while my dad spared no expenses to make sure we were all together as a family during the whole ordeal. He was always a huge pillar of strength and reason, even during the most difficult times.

”

**Daphne Khoo**  
Singer & Songwriter

“

Our faith gave us the peace and ability to overcome the challenges. Daphne's illness brought the family closer together and we now learn not to take life for granted. Every day is a bonus and we intend to live it well.

”

**Madam Denise Ang**  
Manager



## HOW DOES CANCER AFFECT MY FAMILY?

Cancer does not only affect the person with the disease. It also affects his or her family in many ways. These are some ways in which cancer may affect your family and ways to deal with the challenges.

### 1. Communication

While some families share their feelings and worries easily, others may find it hard to talk about cancer. Maintaining open and honest communication with your loved ones is important as you navigate the cancer journey.



- Take the initiative to let your family members know how you feel. Let them know too, if you are not ready to talk about certain aspects of your illness.
- If you have trouble talking about cancer with your family, consider getting help from your family friend, doctor, nurse, counsellor or even a religious leader to work through communications issues.

### 2. Roles and Responsibilities

Your role and responsibilities in your household may change.



- Learn to accept help. It is not a sign of weakness. Besides accepting help from people close to you, consider hiring paid help to lessen your burden.
- Accepting and receiving help is not a sign of weakness. It is a reminder of the love and care our loved ones have for us in time of need.
- Having a clear plan and letting your family members know what to expect will help prevent miscommunication and unnecessary tension.

### 3. Money Matters

Cancer treatments can take a huge toll on the family finances. Depending on how extensive your health insurance coverage is, you may need to cover some additional costs on your own. Costs can also increase if treatment does not go as planned, is extended or if the cancer returns.



- Sit down with your family to work out your finances.
- Check with your insurance company to find out what costs are covered in your health insurance plan.
- Ask the hospital financial counsellor to help you work out the estimated treatment charges. If necessary, he or she may help refer you to financial aid programmes.

## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS

Not everyone deals with cancer in the same way. Communication is important in fostering strong relationships with your loved ones. Here are some tips on how you can better communicate with various family members during this challenging period.

### 1. Spouses / Life Partners

- **Honesty is the best policy** – Maintaining two-way communication is important. Expressing your needs clearly can help avoid misunderstanding and conflict.
- **Tell your spouse / life partner about your feelings** – You may not like discussing negative emotions, but hiding how you feel will prevent your spouse from offering that extra support and reassurance you need on your cancer journey.
- **Get professional help, when necessary** – Cancer can affect sexual intimacy. You may feel anxious or embarrassed to talk about it. Seek help from a counsellor, therapist or your doctor.



### 2. Children

When talking to your children about cancer, cover the following basics:

- The type of cancer
- Where the cancer is in the body
- What will happen with treatment
- How their lives are expected to be changed by cancer and its treatment



#### Should you keep your illness a secret from your children?

Children can sense your worries and become more frightened if they are not given information. In addition, trust may be broken if they hear about your cancer diagnosis from another person. It is better that they learn about the situation from you.

### ♥ Young children aged up to 12 years old ♥

- ✓ **Use age-appropriate words** – For example, say “medicine” instead of “chemotherapy”. For older children, you could explain cancer using a simple analogy of a battle between “good cells” and “bad cells”, and how having treatment can help you beat the bad cells that are making you ill. You can also use children’s books to explain what cancer is to your child.
- ✓ **Avoid telling only the older children** – This may place a huge emotional burden on them.
- ✓ **Prepare younger children before your treatment** – Changes in your physical appearance during treatment may frighten younger children. Minimise anxiety by telling them beforehand.
- ✓ **Regularly reassure your children of your love for them** – Tell them that your discomfort or sadness is caused by your illness, and not because of them.
- ✓ **Encourage your children to share their feelings** – Be around to offer a listening ear, and get your spouse / life partner and other adult family members to do the same too.



### ♥ Teenagers aged 13 to 19 years old ♥

- ✓ **Answer their questions honestly** – At this age, teenagers are likely to have a better understanding of what cancer is and have more questions.
- ✓ **Do not overload your teenager with responsibilities** – While your teenager may be happy to help out, expecting too much from him or her can cause additional stress.
- ✓ **Check in regularly on your teenager** – Watch for changes in behaviour such as changes in academic performance, withdrawal from regular activities and friends, mood changes, drug or alcohol use. These signs could signal that your teenager may need additional support to cope.



### 3. Parents

- ✓ **Get help from other family members** – If you are in charge of your aged parents’ medical appointments or day-to-day living, you may now need some help with their care.
- ✓ **Consider these points when telling your aged parents about your cancer diagnosis**
  - a. What is their state of health?
  - b. Can they cope with the news?
  - c. Can I enlist help from a family member or friend when I break the news to them?





#### 4. Caregivers

✓ **Build a solid tag team** – Your caregivers need help and support to avoid caregiver burnout too. Have a few caregivers on standby so you do not have to depend only on one person. Encourage your caregivers to rest.

✓ **Keep your caregivers informed** – Provide your caregivers with up-to-date information about your cancer treatment and care, emergency numbers, medications and paperwork.

✓ **Remember to say “thank you”** – A simple gesture of appreciation can go a long way.



#### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Keep your spirits up. A good dose of humour, hugs and strong support from loved ones will go a long way in managing the challenges of cancer.

## GETTING HELP FOR DEPRESSION

Depression occurs in about 1 out of every 4 people with cancer. If you have depression, you may find it harder to go about your daily activities and follow treatment plans. Seek medical help instead of suffering silently.

**Learn to recognise the red flags of depression. Call the doctor if you notice five or more of the following symptoms lasting for two weeks or longer, or are severe enough to affect normal daily activities.**

- Sadness or a feeling of emptiness almost every day for most of the day
- Loss of interest in activities
- Eating problems (loss of appetite or overeating) including weight loss or gain\*
- Changes in sleep patterns (inability to sleep, early waking or oversleeping)\*
- Fatigue or decreased energy almost every day\*
- Other people notice that the person is restless or has “slowed down”
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness and helplessness
- Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or attempts at suicide
- Wide mood swings from depression to periods of agitation and high energy

*\*Note that physical problems such as fatigue, poor appetite and sleep changes may be side effects of cancer treatment. Talk to your doctor.*



## GETTING SUPPORT

The Singapore Cancer Society provides rehabilitation support services to help cancer survivors take their first steps toward recovery. The support groups and programmes for cancer patients, survivors and caregivers are:

Bishana	for female cancer survivors as well as women who have been diagnosed with any type of cancer and are receiving treatment
Colorectal Support Group	for colorectal cancer patients and survivors. The programme also aims to help newly-operated ostomates adjust physically and psychologically to a new quality lifestyle. Ostomates are people who have had an ostomy, which refers to surgery to create an opening in the body for the discharge of body wastes
New Voice Club	for nasopharyngeal cancer patients and survivors. It offers support for patients who have had their vocal chords removed
Reach to Recovery	to help breast cancer patients and survivors cope with challenges brought about by breast cancer and its treatment
Walnut Warrior	to help prostate cancer patients and survivors cope with challenges brought about by prostate cancer and its treatment
Look Good... Feel Better Programme	to help female cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy or radiotherapy better manage physical changes from cancer treatment

SCS also runs a variety of free enrichment programmes for its support group members. Through these social recreational activities, cancer patients and survivors get to learn new skills together.

For details on the cancer support groups or enrichment programmes, call **6499 9132**.

SCS also has a team of trained social workers, counsellors, and spiritual care professionals that would be able to provide counselling, emotional and spiritual support when required.

If you wish to speak to someone from the psychosocial services team, please call **64215877** or **64215878**.



## CANCER AND MY FINANCES

“

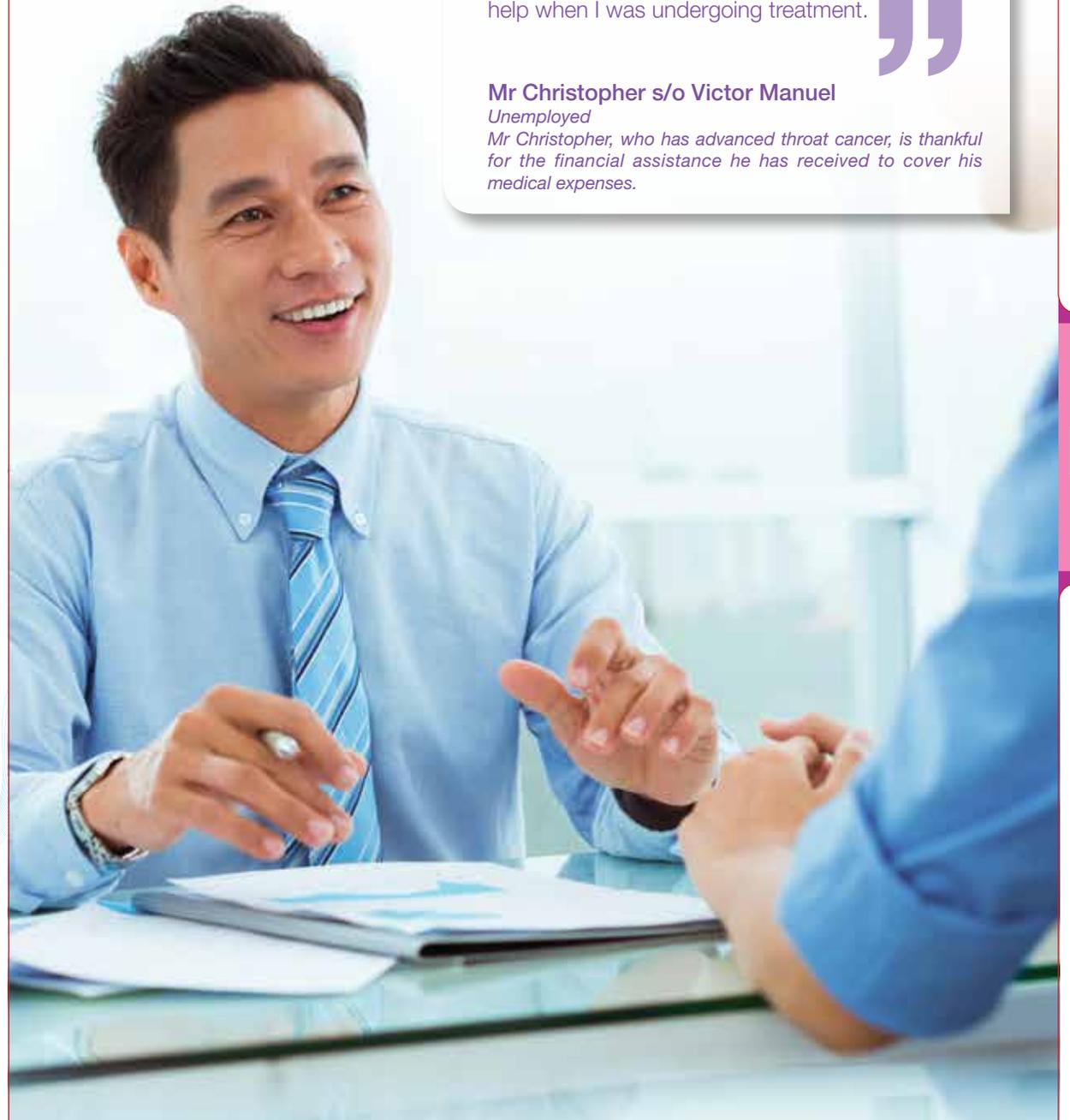
I have been struggling financially ever since I was diagnosed with Stage 4 throat cancer and had to stop work to undergo intensive radiation therapy. Fortunately, my treatment bill was covered by Medifund and my Medisave savings. The Singapore Cancer Society's Welfare Aid Fund, Cancer Treatment Fund and Hospital Transport Scheme also offered financial help when I was undergoing treatment.

”

**Mr Christopher s/o Victor Manuel**

*Unemployed*

*Mr Christopher, who has advanced throat cancer, is thankful for the financial assistance he has received to cover his medical expenses.*



## HOW CAN I FINANCE MY CANCER TREATMENT?

Treatment cost is one of the many pressing concerns after a cancer diagnosis. Besides worrying about your health, you may also be concerned about your financial status. Do I have adequate health insurance coverage to cover the cost of treatment? What are the hidden costs? Will my family be able to cope financially if I have to stop work? These are some questions that may run through your mind.

Before you start treatment, it is helpful to think about the various costs that could add up during your treatment and recovery process. This will help you track your finances, giving you time to look for financial support and help if necessary. Some common costs for cancer-related care include outpatient cost, medication, transportation charges and family expenses, etc.

**Read on to find out more about the existing financial options that are available for people with cancer.**

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Seek advice from your healthcare providers, case managers or social workers. They will be able to offer a bigger picture of the estimated costs of treatment and help you organise your finances. If necessary, they will also help to determine the type of financial assistance you are eligible for.



### 1. Health Insurance

Your health insurance coverage plays a role in how much additional costs you will have to pay from your own pocket. If you have a health insurance plan, be sure to check with the insurance company before you start treatment to find out which medical costs are covered.

Understanding how your insurance policy works and its restrictions can be challenging. That is why it is important to sit down with your insurance agent to find out exactly what your plan covers and what you will need to make the necessary claims.



### 2. Government Schemes and Subsidies

All Singaporeans are covered by heavy government subsidies of up to 80 per cent of the total bill in acute public hospital wards. Other levels of healthcare protection are provided by the following government schemes.

✓ **Medisave** – This compulsory medical savings scheme helps working Singaporeans put aside a portion of their monthly income for future medical expenses.

You can use the savings from your Medisave account to pay for your personal or immediate family members' hospitalisation, day surgery and certain outpatient expenses. You can also use your Medisave for selected cancer related investigations.

Visit [www.moh.gov.sg](http://www.moh.gov.sg) for the latest updates on Medisave withdrawal limits.

✓ **MediShield** – MediShield is a medical insurance scheme designed to help meet large hospitalisation bills which cannot be adequately covered by Medisave. It covers hospitalisation expenses and certain approved outpatient treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy for cancer.

MediShield is operated by the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board.

Visit [www.cpf.gov.sg](http://www.cpf.gov.sg) to learn about the withdrawal limits.



✓ **Medifund** – This is a medical safety net set up by the Government to help needy Singaporeans who cannot afford their subsidised medical bills, even with Medisave and MediShield coverage. If you or your family has difficulties paying your medical bills, you can approach medical social workers at Medifund-approved institutions for assistance.

Visit [www.moh.gov.sg](http://www.moh.gov.sg) to learn more.

✓ **Medication Assistance Fund** – Under this scheme, eligible Singaporean patients receive subsidies to pay for costly drugs that are not covered in the Standard Drug List but have been assessed to be clinically necessary. Note that some drugs are subsidised only for specific medical conditions and the availability of the drugs varies at each public healthcare institution.

To find out if you are eligible for this scheme, check with your healthcare team. Visit [www.moh.gov.sg](http://www.moh.gov.sg) to learn more.



## HOW SINGAPORE CANCER SOCIETY CAN HELP

The Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) believes that no one should walk the cancer journey alone because of financial difficulties. In the last 50 years, SCS has helped needy patients in Singapore through the following financial and welfare schemes.

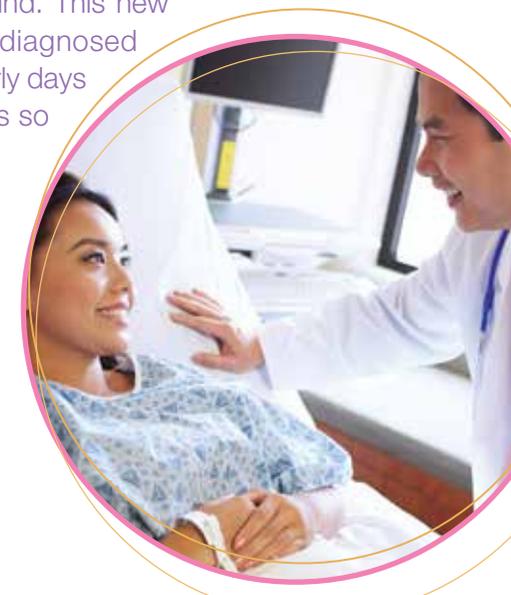


The Singapore Cancer Society is a voluntary welfare organisation. Its programmes and services are funded by public donations. To enquire about SCS financial and welfare schemes, please call **6421 5877** or **6421 5878** or email [welfare@singaporecancersociety.org.sg](mailto:welfare@singaporecancersociety.org.sg).

### 1. SCS Cancer Care Fund

As you learn to cope with your cancer diagnosis, you may also worry about your financial status. Unexpected, out-of-pocket expenses for transportation costs and other daily expenses can take a toll on your finances and add on to your worries.

To complement the current available financial and welfare schemes, SCS has introduced the Cancer Care Fund. This new one-off financial scheme helps newly-diagnosed cancer patients tide through the tough early days by easing some of their financial concerns so that they can focus on treatment.



## 2. SCS Cancer Treatment Fund

Set up in 2005, the SCS Cancer Treatment Fund offers financial help to needy cancer patients by subsidising part of the costs of chemotherapy drugs and IMRT (Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy).

While the fund is not able to meet all the needs of every cancer patient in financial difficulty, it has addressed the concerns of many patients struggling to pay their medical bills. To date, a total of \$6 million has been disbursed to help over 1,000 cancer patients.

Presently, the fund assists needy cancer patients from the National Cancer Centre Singapore, Singapore General Hospital, National University Hospital, KK Women's and Children's Hospital and Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

## 3. SCS Welfare Aid Fund

Since 1967, SCS has been providing financial assistance and free transportation to needy cancer patients. This financial scheme provides temporary financial assistance and/or medical supplies such as milk feeds and colostomy bags to patients from low income families.

Check with a medical social worker from a hospital, hospice or social service office to find out if you are eligible for financial assistance. The application and approval process for welfare aid cases is subject to an eligibility criteria and financial assessment, which is reviewed by the Welfare Aid Committee.

## 4. SCS Hospital Transportation Scheme

SCS free transportation scheme helps financially-needy patients who need to travel from their homes to the restructured hospitals for their treatments. Currently, this service is provided via our passenger vans and volunteer drivers.

Selection for the service is based on the recommendation of each hospital's medical social workers and it is subject to availability. Please contact your medical social worker or SCS should you require this service.

## 5. SCS Help the Children and Youth Programme

SCS Help the Children and Youth Programme (HCYP) reaches out to children and youths who have experienced the impact of cancer, either directly as a patient or indirectly as a loved one of a patient. The cancer journey can be especially challenging - financially, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually - for children and youths as they struggle to find meaning and purpose in their circumstances. Through meaningful activities, the young person is empowered with the tools necessary to go through life and cope with the impact of cancer.

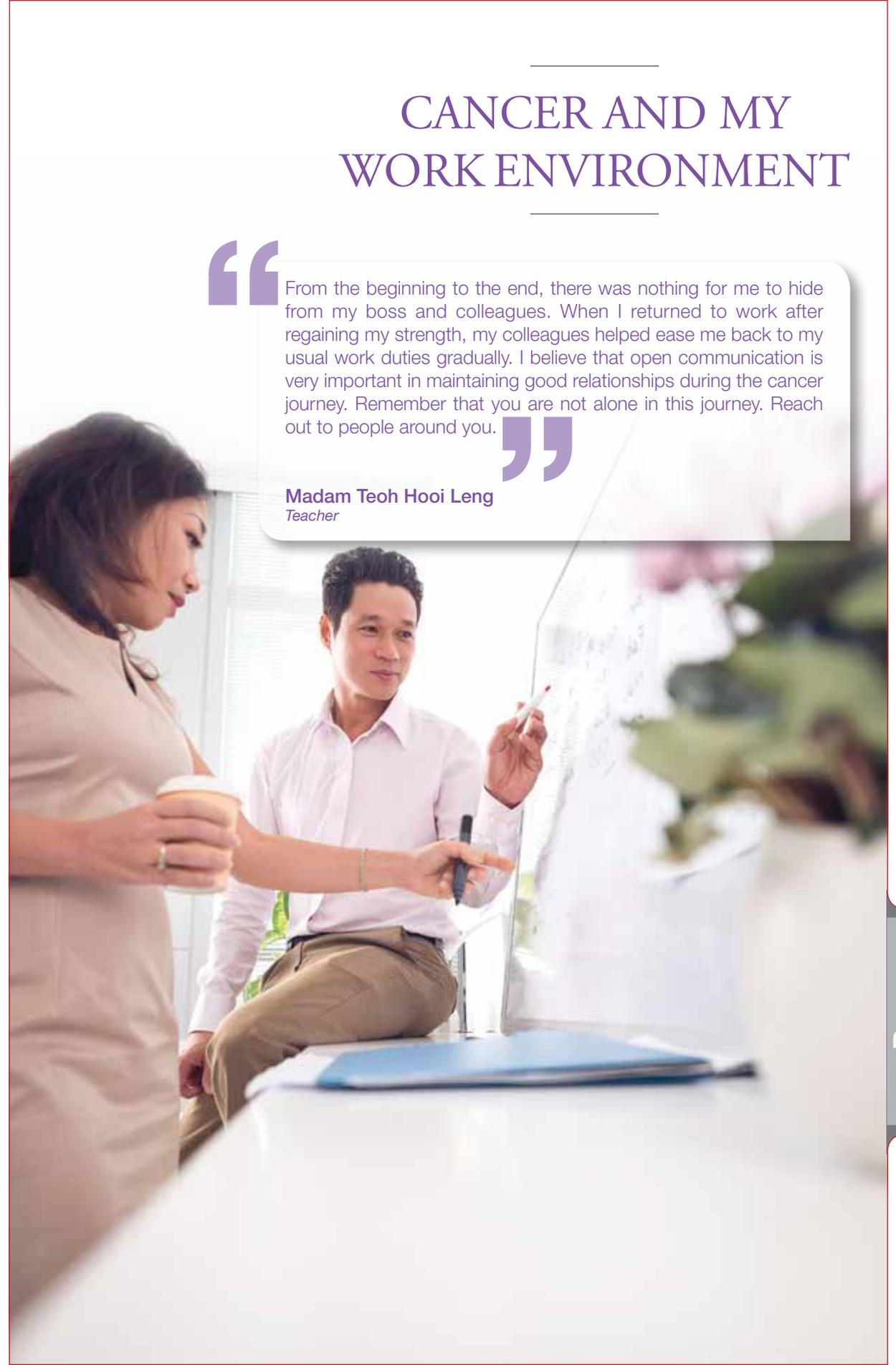
The programme comprises of the following 5 components:

- Education Financial Assistance Scheme
- Tuition Programme
- Youth Engagement and Camps
- Family Engagement
- Book Prize Presentation

# CANCER AND MY WORK ENVIRONMENT

“From the beginning to the end, there was nothing for me to hide from my boss and colleagues. When I returned to work after regaining my strength, my colleagues helped ease me back to my usual work duties gradually. I believe that open communication is very important in maintaining good relationships during the cancer journey. Remember that you are not alone in this journey. Reach out to people around you.”

**Madam Teoh Hooi Leng**  
Teacher



## HOW WILL CANCER AFFECT MY WORK LIFE?

While some people have no problems carrying on with work, others struggle to cope. These are some ways in which cancer may impact your working life.

### 1. It can affect you physically

Coping with cancer can be physically demanding. Common side effects from treatment like pain, fatigue, vomiting and shortness of breath can affect your work productivity, memory and concentration. You may also be more prone to infections, if you are on certain chemotherapy drugs.

### 2. It can affect you emotionally

During your battle against cancer, you may experience a range of negative emotions which can take a toll on your work life. Most people experience some degree of depression and anxiety during their cancer journey.

### 3. It can cause practical issues at work

Chances are, you may have to take time off from work for your treatment or check-ups. Practical problems may crop up if your employer is not supportive or face difficulty offloading your work responsibilities.



## MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT WORK

Whether you choose to stop or carry on working during your treatment depends on many factors. Here are some questions to think over regarding your work arrangements.



1. How much work will I need to cut back on temporarily?
2. How will my cancer treatment affect the way I work, and how much rest should I get during this period?
3. Who can help me?
4. What is my current financial status, and would I need extra financial assistance during this period?
5. If I do not work, where can I get the extra financial help?
6. How safe is it for me and for others, if I continue working during treatment?



# TALKING TO YOUR EMPLOYER

## Q 1. Should I tell my employer that I have cancer?

While you do not need to go into specific details of your cancer, you should let your employer know if your illness could become a safety hazard to yourself or others in your workplace.

By opening up about your illness, it allows you to discuss adjustments and support you may need in the workplace.

## Q 2. Do I have the right to not let my colleagues know?

Your employer will need your permission to share information about your illness.



## Q 3. How much should I disclose to my employer?

You do not have to share details. Instead you can focus on how cancer may impact your work performance or pose certain safety risks. You should also let your employer know if you do not want to share the information with your colleagues.

## Q 4. How can my employer support me?

Check with your employer or HR department about how much paid and unpaid leave you are entitled to. Under Singapore's Employment Act, you are entitled to both paid outpatient and hospitalisation sick leave if you have worked for at least three months with your employer. Your sick leave should be certified by a company or government doctor.

Be sure to give your employer ample notice when you need to take time off, so that he can make other work arrangements.

## Q 5. What can I do if my employer treats me unfairly?

Employers operating in Singapore are expected to follow the Tripartite Guidelines, which include guidelines on employment discrimination.

*If you think you have been unfairly treated, contact the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) for advice.*

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- The uncertainty of cancer treatment and its side effects can make it hard for you to plan work duties beforehand. Be sure to ask your doctor how treatment will affect you and if you can continue working.
- Have an open discussion with your employer to plan the next course of action. For instance, a lighter work load or working from home may be possible with some planning. Even small arrangements like being able to take short breaks to rest during work hours can be helpful.
- Get organised. Keep a work log of meetings, duties, leave taken and appointments. File important documents like work contracts and medical leave certificates in separate folders.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Talk to your colleagues. You may prefer to not tell your colleagues about your cancer diagnosis. However people with cancer do find solace in their co-workers' encouragement and practical support. Consider telling people whom you think are likely to be supportive. If you feel uncomfortable telling them directly, you may ask your supervisor or manager to do so.



## CHANGING JOBS

For some people, returning to the same job after cancer treatment may not be possible. Here are some questions to think over before your job switch.

1. What skills can I transfer over to my new job position?
2. Would I need extra training?
3. What adjustments are needed in my new job?
4. How can I make the adjustment?



*Although cancer treatment may take a toll on your health, it does not make you less qualified for a job. Check with your doctor on the possible restriction you may need to function in a new job.*

## TALKING TO YOUR POTENTIAL EMPLOYER



### 1. What should I tell my potential employer?

While you do not need to go into specific details of your cancer, you need to let your prospective employer know about your illness for insurance purposes as indicated by Ministry of Manpower.



### 2. What should I do if I face discrimination?

You should not be refused employment on the basis of a previous cancer diagnosis or treatment.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you think you have been treated unfairly, you can contact the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) for advice.

## MY LIFE AFTER CANCER



Living with cancer is not always doom and gloom. There was so much laughter during my son's cancer journey. Up until the end of his life, Chris was always in control, supported by a home hospice team who treated him with dignity and respect. Because of them, Chris lived a full life with cancer, not died from it.



### Mrs Pat Hawkes

*Special Education Tutor*

*Mrs Hawkes' 28-year-old son Christopher passed away in August 2014 after a four-year battle with head and neck cancer.*



## REHABILITATION AFTER CANCER

You have finally completed your cancer treatment and are ready to live life anew. However, cancer and its treatment often cause physical and practical problems such as fatigue and muscle weakness. These symptoms can make it challenging for you to ease back to your new 'state of normalcy' and reintegrate to society.

Professional rehabilitation can help you to recover physically and emotionally. This can be especially helpful to survivors who wish to return to work after cancer. Early cancer rehabilitation is beneficial to all patients as it not only helps to build up strength and stamina, but also addresses psychosocial issues. Talk to your healthcare team or Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) to learn more about the available cancer rehabilitation services.



### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Consider professional rehabilitation if you are:

- ✓ feeling weaker now than when you were initially diagnosed
- ✓ having problems with talking or swallowing
- ✓ experiencing pain
- ✓ feeling more lethargic now than before the diagnosis
- ✓ experiencing muscular or orthopaedic problems
- ✓ having difficulty doing the activities you used to do
- ✓ uncertain about how much and what type of exercise you need
- ✓ having problems concentrating or remembering things
- ✓ facing emotional, psychological, vocational, spiritual and even social challenges

### What's New

Cancer patients and survivors on their road to recovery can enjoy additional rehabilitation support by the third quarter of 2015 when SCS's first Cancer Rehabilitation Centre opens.

The centre is SCS's latest commitment to bridging the gap in cancer care in the local community. The holistic inter-disciplinary services and programmes offered by the SCS Cancer Rehabilitation Centre focus beyond patients' physical state of health. They also address their emotional, psychological, social, financial and spiritual needs. Look out for more updates.



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Support from volunteers is an integral part of SCS efforts to minimise the impact of cancer in Singapore.

Cancer survivors can help by joining SCS as a patient ambassador to offer emotional support to people and families who are affected by cancer. The only qualifications you need are enthusiasm and a desire to help. If you wish to volunteer, please contact SCS at **6499 9132**.

# PLANNING AHEAD – MEDICAL & LEGAL

Regardless of your age or current health status, making concrete healthcare and legal plans can offer peace of mind for both yourself and your loved ones. Read on to find out more about the available advance medical and legal planning options.

## 1. Advance Care Planning

Consider this scenario: You are so ill that you are unable to speak for yourself. Who will plan and voice out your care preferences to the medical team?

Advance Care Planning (ACP) is a series of voluntary discussions that allow you to document and share your future healthcare decisions with your healthcare team and family members. Plan ahead with ACP so that your loved ones and caregivers will be sure of your wishes in the event that you are unable to make healthcare decisions for yourself.

**To learn more about ACP, visit *Living Matters* at [www.livingmatters.sg](http://www.livingmatters.sg) or *Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)* at [aic.sg](http://aic.sg)**

Get started on your ACP with these simple steps:

- ✓ Make an appointment with a trained ACP facilitator. You can ask your healthcare provider to refer you to one.
- ✓ Discuss with the ACP facilitator and your loved ones what your idea of living well is.
- ✓ Choose a substitute (or proxy) decision-maker to be your voice when you are unable to speak for yourself. Note that your proxy decision-maker must be at least 21 years old. You may choose a relative, good friend or anyone whom you think will act in your best interests when you are no longer able to do so.
- ✓ Document your preferences with your ACP facilitator's help.
- ✓ Review your ACP document when your medical condition or life circumstances change.

### DID YOU KNOW?

You do not need a lawyer for Advance Care Planning (ACP). A trained ACP facilitator can walk you through the steps. You can also change your mind after the discussion.

## 2. Advance Medical Directive

An Advance Medical Directive (AMD) is a legal document that you sign in advance to inform your doctor that you do not wish to use any extraordinary life-sustaining treatment to prolong your life, in the event of terminal illness or unconsciousness.

To learn more about AMD, visit [www.moh.gov.sg](http://www.moh.gov.sg)

You need to fulfil the following criteria if you wish to make an AMD:

- ✓ You must be above the age of 21 and of sound mind.
- ✓ Three doctors (including your hospital doctor) must all certify that you are terminally ill. Two of the doctors must be specialists.

If there is a disagreement between the doctors, the doctor-in-charge can review it. If there is still no agreement, the Ministry of Health will appoint three additional specialists to review your case. If all the three appointed specialists still cannot certify that you are terminally ill, the AMD cannot take effect.

- ✓ You need to complete and sign the AMD form in the presence of two witnesses – your doctor and someone who is above the age of 21. Both witnesses cannot stand to gain anything from your passing.

### DID YOU KNOW?

You can cancel your AMD at any time by completing a form or writing a letter to the Registrar of AMDs. You will need one witness.



### 3. Lasting Power of Attorney

Through the Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA), you can appoint someone you trust to make decisions and act on your behalf should you lose the mental ability to make these decisions yourself in the future. Loss of mental capacity may happen as a result of a stroke, mental illness or accident.

You can appoint more than one person to be your donee. Your donee must be at least 21 years old and must not be bankrupt if you are appointing him/her for property and affairs matters.

To learn more about making an LPA, visit [www.publicguardian.gov.sg](http://www.publicguardian.gov.sg)

Your donee(s) can help you to act in the following areas:

- ✓ Your personal welfare
- ✓ Your property and affairs
- ✓ Both your personal welfare as well as property and affairs

You need to fulfil the following criteria if you wish to make an LPA:

- ✓ You must be at least 21 years of age.
- ✓ You must possess mental capacity to make your own LPA.
- ✓ You must not be bankrupt if you are appointing a property and affairs donee.
- ✓ You must register your LPA with the Office of Public Guardian for it to be legally valid.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

The LPA should only be used when you are certified to be incapable of managing your own affairs. Should you regain your mental capacity again, your donee should step aside to allow you to manage your own affairs.

### 4. Planning A Will

A Will ensures that your loved ones are provided for according to your wishes after your death. The contents of this legal document describe your estate (which refers to all of your money, savings and assets) and how it will be distributed among your beneficiaries after your death.

Instructions on other issues such as the care of minor children and special needs children, as well as formation of trusts may also be covered in your Will.

Wills made in Singapore are governed by the Wills Act. Although you do not need a lawyer to make a Will, many people seek legal advice to avoid issues that could cause their homemade Will to be invalid.

Consider visiting a free legal clinic to find out more. For a list of free legal clinics in Singapore, visit [legalclinics.sg](http://legalclinics.sg)

To learn more about making a Will, visit [www.lawsociety.org.sg](http://www.lawsociety.org.sg)



#### DID YOU KNOW?

If you pass away without a Will, your estate will be distributed based on the Interstate Succession Act. As such, your estate may not be distributed to people whom you wish to provide for after your death.

## PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES

At some point during your treatment, your doctor may feel that you may benefit from hospice care. Also known as palliative care, this concept of care focuses on improving quality of life by relieving pain and other distressing symptoms. It also offers practical and psychosocial support to family members and caregivers.

#### *Palliative care myth debunked:*

*Receiving hospice or palliative care does not necessarily mean you are given a death sentence. There are patients who go on to live full lives after their conditions stabilise. If you feel that palliative care can help you, ask your doctor for advice.*

## Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) Hospice Care

### The SCS Hospice team provides the following services:

#### ✓ **Clinical assessment and treatment during home visits**

The team teaches patients and their caregivers how to manage symptoms like pain and breathlessness.

#### ✓ **Home rehabilitation**

Therapists go through physical exercises to maintain patients' strength and function, as well as provide home modification advice and caregiver training.

#### ✓ **Psychosocial services**

The team offers financial assistance, psychosocial, emotional and spiritual support to patients and caregivers. Bereavement support is also provided to family members and caregivers in the months following the death of a patient.

#### ✓ **Loan of equipment**

SCS loans equipment such as oxygen concentrators and syringe drivers, as well as rehabilitative equipment such as wheelchairs, commodes, and walking aids to patients.

SCS accepts patients through hospital or clinic referrals. For more information, call **6421 5832** or email [hospice@singaporecancersociety.org.sg](mailto:hospice@singaporecancersociety.org.sg)

Hospice care is about "caring and loving". It emphasises the importance of quality of life. The focus is on providing relief of pain and other distressing symptoms, as well as ensuring emotional, spiritual and practical support for the patient and the family.

– Singapore Hospice Council



## USEFUL CONTACTS

Advance Care Planning National Office – Agency for Integrated Care	Tel: 6603 6800 Email: <a href="mailto:livingmatters@aic.sg">livingmatters@aic.sg</a> Website: <a href="http://aic.sg">http://aic.sg</a>
Ministry of Manpower (MOM) Contact Centre	Phone: 6438 5122 Website: <a href="http://www.mom.gov.sg/">http://www.mom.gov.sg/</a>
National Cancer Centre Singapore Cancer Helpline	Tel: 6225 5655 Email: <a href="mailto:cancerhelpline@nccs.com.sg">cancerhelpline@nccs.com.sg</a> Website: <a href="http://www.nccs.com.sg">http://www.nccs.com.sg</a>
National University Cancer Institute, Singapore CancerLine	Tel: 9722 0569 Email: <a href="mailto:cancerlinenurse@nuhs.edu.sg">cancerlinenurse@nuhs.edu.sg</a> Website: <a href="http://www.ncis.com.sg">http://www.ncis.com.sg</a>
Singapore Hospice Council	Tel: 6538 2231 Email: <a href="mailto:secretariat@singaporehospice.org.sg">secretariat@singaporehospice.org.sg</a> Website: <a href="http://www.singaporehospice.org.sg">http://www.singaporehospice.org.sg</a>
Samaritans of Singapore	Tel: 1800-221-4444 Email: <a href="mailto:pat@samaritans.org.sg">pat@samaritans.org.sg</a> Website: <a href="https://www.sos.org.sg">https://www.sos.org.sg</a>
Singapore Silver Line	Tel: 1800 650 6060 Website: <a href="https://www.silverpages.sg">https://www.silverpages.sg</a>
Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices	Phone: 6838 0969 Website: <a href="http://www.taefep.sg/">http://www.taefep.sg/</a>



## REFERENCES

American Cancer Society	<a href="http://www.cancer.org">http://www.cancer.org</a>
Canadian Cancer Society	<a href="http://www.cancer.ca">http://www.cancer.ca</a>
CancerCare	<a href="http://www.cancercare.org">http://www.cancercare.org</a>
Cancer Council Australia	<a href="http://www.cancer.org.au">http://www.cancer.org.au</a>
Cancer Council SA	<a href="http://www.cancersa.org.au">http://www.cancersa.org.au</a>
Cancer.Net	<a href="http://www.cancer.net">http://www.cancer.net</a>
Central Provident Fund Board	<a href="http://mycpf.cpf.gov.sg">http://mycpf.cpf.gov.sg</a>
Health Promotion Board	<a href="http://www.hpb.gov.sg">http://www.hpb.gov.sg</a>
Living Matters: Advance Care Planning	<a href="https://www.primarycarepages.sg/livingmatters/">https://www.primarycarepages.sg/livingmatters/</a>
LIVESTRONG Foundation	<a href="http://www.livestrong.org">http://www.livestrong.org</a>
Macmillan Cancer Support	<a href="http://www.macmillan.org.uk">http://www.macmillan.org.uk</a>
Ministry of Manpower	<a href="http://www.mom.gov.sg">http://www.mom.gov.sg</a>
Ministry of Health, Singapore Health Facts, Principal Causes of Death	<a href="http://www.moh.gov.sg">http://www.moh.gov.sg</a>
National Cancer Institute	<a href="http://www.cancer.gov">http://www.cancer.gov</a>
National Environment Agency	<a href="http://app2.nea.gov.sg">http://app2.nea.gov.sg</a>
Singapore Cancer Registry	Interim Report, Trends in Cancer Incidence in Singapore 2009-2013
Singapore Free Legal Clinics	<a href="http://legalclinics.sg/">http://legalclinics.sg/</a>
Singapore Hospice Council	<a href="http://www.singaporehospice.org.sg/">http://www.singaporehospice.org.sg/</a>
The Law Society of Singapore	<a href="http://www.lawsociety.org.sg">http://www.lawsociety.org.sg</a>
Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices	<a href="http://www.tafep.sg">http://www.tafep.sg</a>

## GLOSSARY

Benign tumour	a non-cancerous growth in the body that stays in one location and does not spread to other parts of the body
Biopsy	a medical procedure that involves taking a small tissue sample and examining it under a microscope
Blood count	refers to a count of the number of cells in a given blood sample
Carcinogen	a substance that can cause cancer
Clinical trials	research studies which use human volunteers to test new drugs or treatments
Extraordinary life-sustaining treatment	refers to medical treatment that artificially prolongs the lives of terminally ill patients without curing the illness
Genetic mutation	an abnormal change in a gene
Genetic testing	a type of testing that is used to check for mutations in a person's genes that may increase cancer risk
Malignant tumour	a cancerous growth in the body that can invade nearby tissues and spread to other parts of the body
Mental capacity	means being unable to make your own decisions
Oncologist	a doctor who specialises in treating people with cancer
Palliative care	also known as hospice care, this concept of care focuses on improving quality of life by relieving distressing symptoms experienced by patients who are seriously ill. It also offers practical and psychosocial support to family members and caregivers
Prognosis	a prediction of the course of disease or the estimated outlook for survival
Rehabilitation	a programme that helps maximise recovery after a serious illness or injury
Tumour	a lump or growth in a part of the body that is formed from abnormal cells. Tumours can be benign or malignant