

What Not to Say to Cancer Patients

- Nothing
- I know how you feel
- Did you smoke?
- How did you get it?
- You should/shouldn't
- Why didn't you tell me?
- You don't look sick
- I wish I could lose that much weight
- Everything is going to be fine
- You'll be okay
- I'm sure you will be fine
- You are strong, you are brave
- I know what you're going through is difficult
- I know going through this is hard.
- Well, at least you got a good kind of cancer
- That's a good cancer to have
- Be happy you got the good cancer
- God never gives you more than you can handle
- Everything happens for a reason
- Everything's going to be fine
- At least you get new boobs
- That wig looks great on you
- Maybe you should have exercised more/eaten more vegetables, etc.
- How long do you have to live?
- What are your odds?
- How can I help?
- Call me if you need something
- Let me know how I can help
- Let me know if you need anything
- How are you?
- Are you throwing up all the time?
- I didn't think you'd be feeling up for it
- I have heard that "X" cures cancer
- You don't look sick or like a cancer patient
- Congratulations, you are through treatment, and now your life can go back to normal!
- Congrats, your treatment is over!
- I had a friend who died of cancer
- I am sorry
- I am glad it's you and not me that has cancer

What to Say to Cancer Patients

- I'm not sure what to say right now, but I want you to know I love you
- How are you really doing
- We're going to get through this together
- We've got this
- Count on me for dinners/picking up the kids/taking you to the doctor
- Can I mow your lawn this weekend?
- I'd like to offer to give your kids a ride to school or other activities.
- I'd like to take you to your appointments when you need it. Do you need a ride to your next one?
- Can I walk your dog twice a week?
- Can I pick up some groceries for you?
- Can I coordinate meals for you? What days would be best?
- Can I come over and clean house/do laundry for you/cook a meal?

DO NOT'S

- Don't share a story with a bad ending
- Don't set up a false front or a happy face if you don't really feel that way
- Don't ask too many specific questions especially in a public place.
- Don't walk on eggshells around them because you are unsure of what to say.
- Don't take it personally if they cancel on you. There are some days when they just cannot do it
- Don't only talk about cancer. They did not choose to be in this situation and cannot let it define them.
- Don't only talk about yourself.
- Don't tell them about your brother's sister's husband's cousin who beat their cancer. Don't you think they have researched "cures" and "alternative treatments"? They want to live too.
- Don't tell them to fight. What else do you think they are doing?
- Don't tell them they are a hero. Yes, a hero is someone who demonstrates strength in the face of adversity. But the truth is that they are just treading water, trying to survive.
- Do not assume they are feeling well based on their overall appearance. The two do not go hand-in-hand.
- Don't stop inviting them to do things. Sometimes, it's after treatment has completed that the emotional needs are highest

DO'S

- Do your best not to blatantly stare at visible wounds, scars, reconstructed boobs, etc.
- Do your best not to cry. It makes them super uncomfortable. They feel like they have to comfort you in their time of need.

- Do invite them out even though they may say no and stay home 80 to 90% of the time, but there is a chance that they will say yes.
- Do bring over food. Even with a limited appetite, they love having options. When you get any type of serious diagnosis, there are usually people around, and food always helps. Appetites can vary during treatment or after surgery, so it is nice when different foods are coming to the house. There is a possibility that they haven't eaten for a while or nothing is appealing. Wouldn't it be nice if you helped them to start eating again?
- Do spend quality time with them when you are available and your schedules link up. When you receive a diagnosis such as cancer, you tend to put more weight on things that matter, like quality time.
- Checking in regularly with cards, phone calls and visits over the entire course of treatment and beyond will be tremendously helpful
- Do ask if they need a ride. This is always a thoughtful gesture, although it's not for everyone. Some enjoy their own company and like to go to most of their appointments alone, but everyone is different.
- Do offer to help with any animals they may have. On days when they're not feeling well, having to feed, walk and take care of a pet can be a challenge.
- Do check in regularly. The worst thing to do is stay silent. When someone doesn't reach out, they think they are not interested in being a part of their life.
- Do ask them to connect with people who are in a similar situation. It's really helpful to talk to people who are in the same stage of cancer and had or are having similar experiences. However, the stage part is really important.
- Give advice only when you are asked
- Support their treatment decisions.
- The most important thing you can do for someone is to listen:
 - How did the last test go?
 - How did the last treatment go?
 - How are things going today?