9. How long does cancer treatment take?
The time it takes to treat someone with cancer will depend on what type of cancer it is, how serious it is, and how much treatment they need. The doctor will give your mum or dad a ‘Treatment Plan’. This plan will give the dates of the treatments, and how many of them there will be. You could put them on your calendar, or use Tiger Time so you can see how much treatment your mum or dad has left.

10. What is chemotherapy?
Sometimes people take medicine called chemotherapy. It uses special kinds of chemicals to destroy cancer cells. It is usually given through a needle inserted into a vein. Your mum or dad will have ‘rounds’ or ‘cycles’ of chemotherapy which means they will be given the medicine one week and left to rest for a while before they have more medicine.

11. What is radiotherapy?
Sometimes people have radiation therapy, or radiotherapy, to help get rid of cancer cells. It is done with a special machine that is made just for cancer treatment. The radiation (powerful energy rays) is given only to the area of the body where the cancer is. It doesn’t hurt.

12. Does radiotherapy make you radioactive?
No. Radiotherapy is like an x-ray. It doesn’t hurt. It’s safe to touch the person who has had radiotherapy.

13. What are ‘side-effects’?
Side effects of cancer treatment happen because the treatment damages healthy cells as well as killing the cancer cells. You will be able to see some of the side effects such as: hair falling out, scars from surgery, mouth sores and weight loss. Other side effects can’t be seen such as: feeling tired, feeling sick, wanting to rest more, not being able to play, feeling weepy and a bit bad-tempered. After your mum or dad has finished with all of their treatments, these things will go away.

14. Why does a person look so sick when the doctors are meant to be fixing them?
Cancer medicine needs to be very powerful for it to work properly. But because it is so strong it can damage some normal cells, like hair cells or stomach cells, as well as cancer cells. This is why hair sometimes falls out, or people feel sick. Remember that the medicine’s aim is to help make them better and that it is doing them good – even though it may sometimes make them look and feel poorly. It also doesn’t mean the cancer is getting worse. When treatment is over the normal cells will grow back again.

15. If I stop being naughty will it take the cancer away?
Being naughty or saying unkind things didn’t make your mum or dad have cancer. It was nothing to do with what you did or said.

16. If I wish for the cancer to go away, will it?
Sadly wishing a cancer away won’t make your mum or dad better. They need proper cancer treatment to help them. You can make other wishes though like ‘I wish that when my mum is better we can go to the beach’.

17. Do children get cancer?
Yes, unfortunately children do get cancer. It is rare for children to get cancer. More adults get cancer than children.

18. What does it mean when people say the cancer has spread?
The cancer cells can travel to another part of the body and start growing there. The doctors will be able to know this by looking inside the body.
Your doctor has told you that you have cancer… and it feels as if your world has fallen apart. But you are a parent and you have to make a decision. Do you tell your children? Do they need to know? You may decide that talking with your children about your cancer will worry them too much. So you may choose not to say anything to them about your cancer diagnosis. Over the next few days and weeks your child might notice the following things happening at home.
Your doctor has told you that you have cancer...

But you are a parent and you have to make a decision.

Do you tell your children? Do they need to know?

You may decide that talking with your children about your cancer will worry them too much.

So you may choose not to say anything to them about your cancer diagnosis.

Over the next few days and weeks your child might notice the following things happening at home.
What would happen if you decided to be open with your child and tell them about your cancer diagnosis? There would then be no reason to hide your stress and worries, or hold conversations in secret.

Protecting your child against harm is natural but it can be more harmful to leave them out. This may lead to your child feeling confused and worried or... angry and frightened.

No matter how old your child is they will pick up that something is wrong. A busy house with visitors coming and going, phones ringing, adults talking in whispers. Your child will feel included, supported and loved, and more importantly won't blame themselves. Also, you could support each other. So how do you tell them?
What would happen if you decided to be open with your child and tell them about your cancer diagnosis?

There would then be no reason to hide your stress and worries, or hold conversations in secret. Protecting your child against harm is natural but it can be more harmful to leave them out.

Your child will feel included, supported and loved, and more importantly won’t blame themselves.

Also you could support each other.

So how do you tell them?
Crying is good as it shows them that it's OK to show emotions. Don't assume they have the same fears as you and don't make promises you can't keep.

Tell them what you currently know, and try not to predict the future. Tell them that you love them, and make sure they understand that they will always be looked after.

Every child is different, and every family is different. How you tell them about your cancer diagnosis will be dependent on their age, their level of understanding and how your family talk to each other.

Most 3 to 5 year olds have a very basic understanding of sickness. They might think they can catch cancer like a cold. Most children this age need to simply hear that cancer is a sickness, that you are trying to get better with the help of the doctors and that nothing they did or said made you get cancer. They most likely won’t ask any questions. Don’t be surprised if they want to go and play, after telling them or react like nothing has happened.

Choose a calm space and a quiet time of day.

If you think that it might be too hard or upsetting for you to tell them on your own, you could ask someone you and your children trust to be with you for support.

If you have more than one child, try to tell them together. If you think that it might be too hard or upsetting for you to tell them on your own, you could ask someone you and your children trust to be with you for support.

Rehearse what you might say, and the answers you might give to their questions.

Start with simple and short sentences. If you have more than one child, try to tell them together.

GIVE YOUR CHILDREN TIME TO TAKE THE INFORMATION IN. BE HONEST. SILENCES ARE O.K.

Don’t use confusing terms like “I have a bug” or “I have the big C” ask if they have any worries. It’s O.K. to say you don’t have the answers to their questions.
Crying is good as it shows them that it’s okay to show emotions. Don’t assume they have the same fears as you and don’t make promises you can’t keep.

Tell them what you currently know and try not to predict the future. Tell them that you love them and make sure they understand that they will always be looked after.

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Most 3 to 5 year olds have a very basic understanding of sickness. They might think they can catch cancer like a cold.

They may also think that they caused the cancer by being naughty.

They most likely won’t ask any questions.

Don’t be surprised if they want to go and play, after telling them or react like nothing has happened.

Choosing a calm space and a quiet time of day.

If you have more than one child, try to tell them together.

If you think that it might be too hard or upsetting for you to tell them on your own, you could ask someone you and your children trust to be with you for support.

Rehearse what you might say, and the answers you might give to their questions.

Start with simple and short sentences.

Give your children time to take the information in.

Be honest.

Silences are okay.

Don’t use confusing terms like “I have a bug,” or “I have the big C.”

Ask if they have any worries.

It’s okay to say you don’t have the answers to their questions.

Most children this age need to simply hear that cancer is a sickness, that you are trying to get better with the help of the doctors and that nothing they did or said made you get cancer.
Your child may feel sad, angry, anxious, guilty, or be easily embarrassed. They may not be able to pay attention at school, or they may try to be extra good.

Children this age will probably worry about being separated from you, and be afraid of new things and situations. Older children may have similar fears to those experienced by younger children. They will feel a range of emotions and may need time and space to themselves. Their friends will be an important source of support.

Some children may behave as if they are in denial, which may be upsetting to you, but can be a good coping mechanism for them. Teenagers may struggle with being normal and want more independence, but feel guilty about doing so.

They may start to behave younger, like wetting the bed or sucking their thumb or... being afraid of the dark.

They may also start acting aggressively and start hitting and biting.

Children aged 6 to 11 may be able to understand much more about cancer but they often fill gaps in their knowledge with their own ideas. They can still believe that they can catch cancer, or that they caused it.

They may also think that all people with cancer die.

Support your child by:

- Listening to their play
- Being alert to their feelings
- Sticking to routines and boundaries
- Keep answering their same repeated questions
- Keeping to a routine
- Being alert to their feelings

Letting their school know

Preparing them for changes that might happen to your appearance

Tell them about any changes to who is looking after them

Try and include them in age-appropriate jobs around the house

Assure them that not everyone with cancer dies
Your child may feel sad, angry, anxious, guilty, or be easily embarrassed. They may not be able to pay attention at school, or ...

They may try to be extra good.

Children this age will probably worry about being separated from you, and be afraid of new things and situations.

Older children may have similar fears to those experienced by younger children. They will feel a range of emotions and may need time and space to themselves.

Teenagers may struggle with being normal and want more independence, but feel guilty about doing so.

Some children may behave as if they are in denial, which may be upsetting to you, but can be a good coping mechanism for them. Teenagers may struggle with being normal and want more independence, but feel guilty about doing so.

Their friends will be an important source of support.
Older children will get information from online sources, so remind them that not all information they read will be true. Point them to a few reliable websites.

Keep the communication lines open by trying different ways to communicate, like talking in the car or...

Messages left on post-it notes around the house, or texts or using a family notepad that everyone can write on.

Remember children are good at coping if they feel supported and feel that you are being honest with them. There is support out there for both you and your family. We know it’s hard but we think it will be really helpful to tell your children about your cancer.

If you want to talk about any of the ideas or suggestions in this comic or you feel you need more advice, do talk to your cancer nurse specialist. They will be able to help you.
FURTHER SUPPORT & INFORMATION

CANCER EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

Younger Children

Apps and Games
- Kids Guide to Cancer: Camp quality app
  www.campquality.org.au/kidsguidetocancer

Books
- Mummy’s lump by Gillian Forrest
  www.bupa.co.uk/bupa-cancer-promise/i-know-someone-with-cancer

Older Children

Books
- The Secret C by Julie Stokes
- What’s up with Bridget’s mom? Medikidz Comic explain breast cancer
  www.medikidz.com/gb-en

Apps and Games
- 'Tumour Takedown' - Free game from Centre of The Cell.
  www.centreofthecell.org/learn-play/centre-of-the-cell-apps/tumour-takedown/

CANCER EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

Websites
- Cancer Research UK:  www.cancerhelp.org.uk
- National Cancer Institute: www.cancer.gov
- Macmillan Cancer Support www.macmillan.org.uk
- American Cancer Society www.cancer.org
- Cancer Council Australia www.cancer.org.au

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

Younger Children

Books
- Becky and the worry cup by Wendy Harpham
- Cancer Book for Kids: Someone I love is Sick
  www.someoneloveissick.com
- Arthur: When Someone You know has cancer
  www-tc.pbskids.org/arthur/health/pdf/arthur_cancer_english.pdf
- Our Mom Has Cancer by Abigail Ackermann
- The Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside
Older Children

Books
- A Monster Calls by Patrick Ness
- Because... Someone I love has cancer: Kids Activity Book by the American Cancer Society
- When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness: Children Can Learn to Cope with Loss and Change (Drawing Out Feelings) by Marge Eaton Heegaard
- My Parent Has Cancer and It Really Sucks by Maya Silva and Marc Silva
- The Survivorship Net by Jim Owens
- American Cancer Society’s free booklet “It Helps to Have Friends When Mom or Dad Has Cancer”
- Macmillan’s Free Booklet “A guide for young people looking after someone with cancer”
- The Year My Mother Was Bald by Ann Speltz

Websites
- Riprap
  www.riprap.org.uk
- Canteen - ‘My Parent has/had Cancer’ section
  www.canteen.org.au
- YoungMinds
  www.youngminds.org.uk

Support for Adults

Websites
- Macmillan Cancer Support
  https://be.macmillan.org.uk
- As big as it gets by Winston’s Wish.
- American Cancer Society’s Free Booklets
  1) After Diagnosis: A Guide for Patients and Families
  2) Helping Children When a Family Member Has Cancer: Dealing With Treatment
  3) Helping Children When a Family Member Has Cancer: Dealing With Recurrence or Progressive
- Macmillan’s Free Booklets
  1) “Talking about your cancer”
  2) “Talking to children when an adult has cancer”
- Cancercare for Kids www.cancercareforkids.org
- Resource List at Kids Konnected
  http://kidskonnected.org/resources/
- Breast Cancer Care Resources
  www.breastcancercare.org.uk
- Cancer.net
  www.cancernet/coping-with-cancer
- Young Carer
  www.youngcarer.com

Bereavement & Death

Websites
- Winston’s Wish
  www.winstonswish.org.uk
- Marie Curie Cancer Care
  www.mariecurie.org.uk
- Child Bereavement UK
  www.childbereavementuk.org
- Cruse Bereavement Care
  www.cruse.org.uk

Books & Activities
- Macmillan’s Free Booklet “Preparing a child for loss”
- American Cancer Society’s Free Booklets
  1) Dealing with a Parent’s terminal illness
  2) When a child has lost a Parent
- Elephants Tea Party
  www.elephantsteaparty.co.uk

THE WINSTON’S WISH WEBSITE HAS A REALLY BRILLIANT LIST OF BOOKS ABOUT BEREAVEMENT AND LOSS
# Explaining Words

Explaining difficult words to children. Text in orange boxes is for younger children, text in green boxes is for older children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Anaesthetic</strong></th>
<th>A medicine that makes someone go to sleep so they don’t feel anything when they have an operation.</th>
<th>A drug that stops people feeling pain during a procedure such as surgery. A general anaesthetic puts someone to sleep. A local anaesthetic numbs one area of the body.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benign</strong></td>
<td>A bump or lump on the body that isn’t dangerous.</td>
<td>Not cancer. Benign lumps or tumours do not spread to other parts of the body or become cancerous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biopsy</strong></td>
<td>When the doctor looks at cells in the body to see if they’re healthy or not.</td>
<td>A test to diagnose cancer. The doctor takes small bits of tissue from the body to look at under a microscope to see if the cells alive changed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blood count</strong></td>
<td>A test that checks how healthy the blood is.</td>
<td>A test that counts the different types of blood cells in the body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cancer</strong></td>
<td>Cancer is when misbehaving cells stop good cells from doing their job. The misbehaving cells can grow into a lump or can cause problems in the blood. They can spread around the body too.</td>
<td>Cancer is the name for more than 100 diseases in which abnormal cells grow out of control. This causes problems in the blood, or lumps – called tumours – to grow. Cancer can spread to other parts of the body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cells</strong></td>
<td>The body is made up of billions of tiny things called cells, and each has a job to make your body work and stay healthy.</td>
<td>Cells are the basic building blocks of the body. Our bodies constantly make new cells: to enable us to grow, to replace worn-out cells or to heal damaged cells after an injury.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chemotherapy</strong></td>
<td>Medicine that kills the bad cancer cells.</td>
<td>Special drugs that kill cancer cells or slow their growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CT scan</strong></td>
<td>A test that makes pictures for doctors to be able to see what’s happening inside someone’s body.</td>
<td>A procedure that takes x-rays to get 3-D pictures of the inside of the body and show if cancer is present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diagnosis</strong></td>
<td>When the doctor works out what is making someone sick.</td>
<td>Working out what kind of disease or illness someone has.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immune system</strong></td>
<td>The part of the body that helps someone stay well by getting rid of germs inside the body. It fights illness if somebody does get sick.</td>
<td>A network of cells and organs that helps protect the boy from germs like bacteria and viruses, which can make people sick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intravenous (IV)</strong></td>
<td>Putting a needle into a vein (where blood flows in the body).</td>
<td>Something put into the vein, like a drip for feeding, or a needle to give medication or take out some blood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Malignant cells / Malignant tumour</strong></td>
<td>Another way of saying cancer. Cells or lumps that are misbehaving.</td>
<td>Cancer. Malignant cells can spread to other parts of the body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medical oncologist</strong></td>
<td>A special doctor who uses strong medicine to treat people with cancer.</td>
<td>A specialist doctor who treats cancer with chemotherapy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Metastasis (advanced cancer)</strong></td>
<td>When the misbehaving cells have spread to another part of the body.</td>
<td>When cancer has spread from one part of the body to another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nausea</strong></td>
<td>Feeling sick in the tummy.</td>
<td>Feeling as if you’re going to vomit. Nausea is a common side effect of chemotherapy.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palliative treatment</strong></td>
<td>When the doctors and nurses can’t stop the cancer from growing, but give the person medicine to make them feel better and stop the pain.</td>
<td>Treatment that reduces or stops symptoms but doesn’t try to cure the cancer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prognosis</strong></td>
<td>What the doctors think might happen to someone who is ill – i.e. how soon they will get better.</td>
<td>What is likely to happen when someone has a disease, especially their chance of getting better and what might happen after treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radiation oncologist</strong></td>
<td>A special doctor who treats people who have cancer using x-rays that beam into the body.</td>
<td>A specialist doctor who prescribes radiotherapy and organizes the treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radiotherapy</strong></td>
<td>Invisible beams called x-rays that go into the body to kill cancer cells and make the cancer smaller.</td>
<td>The use of radiation in the form of x-rays to kill or injure cancer cells so they can’t grow or multiply. This is different to when you get x-rayed to see inside you (e.g. for a broken leg).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recurrence/ relapse</strong></td>
<td>If cancer cells are left in the body, they can start to grow again, and the cancer comes back.</td>
<td>When cancer comes back because of cancer cells that have not been affected by treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remission</strong></td>
<td>When the cancer goes away after treatment.</td>
<td>When cancer cells and symptoms disappear because of treatment. Remission doesn’t mean the cancer is cured, but it is now under control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Side effects</strong></td>
<td>Treatment can stop good cells from working, as well as bad cells. This can sometimes cause problems for the person with cancer, such as feeling tired, feeling sick or losing their hair.</td>
<td>The unwanted effects of treatment such as nausea, hair loss, rash or fatigue from chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy. They occur because fast-growing healthy cells may also be destroyed by these treatments so they can’t do their usual work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surgery</strong></td>
<td>This is when someone has an operation. A special doctor will cut out the cancer.</td>
<td>An operation by a surgeon who removes the part of the body affected by cancer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symptoms</strong></td>
<td>What people feel (e.g. sore, itchy) or see (e.g. redness, a lump) when things aren’t right in their body.</td>
<td>Changes in the body caused by an illness, such as pain, tenderness, rash, stomach-ache etc. These help the doctor work out what is wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tumour</strong></td>
<td>A lump in the body that shouldn’t be there.</td>
<td>A lump in the body caused by uncontrolled growth of cells. Tumours can be benign (not dangerous) or malignant (cancer).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ultrasound</strong></td>
<td>A test that makes pictures of the inside of the body so the doctor can work out if anything is wrong.</td>
<td>A scan that uses sound to create a picture of the body. It helps show where and how big a tumour is.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANSWERING CHILDREN’S QUESTIONS ABOUT CANCER

Children may not ask questions when you first speak with them about your cancer. Keep the conversation open by letting them know it’s OK to ask any questions as they come up. They may ask at seemingly “odd” moments, for instance while you are in the supermarket, or driving the car. This is because it can feel safer for them to ask difficult things when you are not looking directly at them.

Try to answer their questions in a clear, simple and honest way. It’s fine to say if you don’t know the answer to a question. Some questions don’t have clear answers and some you might need to check and get back to them. It’s also OK for you to say if you need a little time to think about how to answer.

1. What is cancer?
The body is made up of cells. Cells make our bodies work. They are so tiny that you need a microscope to see them. Cancer cells don’t look or act like normal cells. They don’t allow our normal, healthy cells to work properly. They can grow very fast and spread. Cancer cells may group together to form a tumour. There are many different types of cancer, and cancer can grow anywhere in the body.

2. How do you get cancer?
There is still a lot we don’t know about how cancer begins and what causes it. Sometimes cancer can be caused by chemicals, air pollution (smoke), certain viruses, and other things both inside and outside the body.

3. How many different types of cancer are there?
There are over 200 different types of cancer. There are so many because cancer can affect any type of cell in the body (and there are lots of different types of cell).

4. What is the difference between a blood cancer and breast cancer?
Cancer cells can grow anywhere in the body as the whole body is made up of cells. A blood cancer means the person has cancer cells in their blood and breast cancer means somebody has cancer cells in their breast. All cancers share some characteristics, like uncontrolled growth, but the way a cancer behaves, for example how fast it grows, will differ between each cancer type.

5. Why do some people get cancer?
Most of the time, the doctors do not know why someone gets cancer. It’s hard having not all of the answers, but the truth is we don’t.

6. Can you catch cancer?
Cancer is not something that you can catch from someone else, like you can a cold or chicken pox. You can be close to the person who has cancer and not worry about catching it.

7. Did I do something that caused the cancer?
No. Nothing that anyone does, say or thinks can cause cancer in someone else.

8. Does it hurt having cancer?
Cancer can cause different symptoms depending on where the lump (tumour) is in the body. For example, a lump pressed on another part of the body might be painful. Doctors can give medicine to stop the pain though. Having cancer can hurt feelings too; people can feel a range of emotions, such as sadness or anger, or they may be very quiet.
9. How long does cancer treatment take?  
The time it takes to treat someone with cancer will depend on what type of cancer it is, how serious it is, and how much treatment they need. The doctor will give your mum or dad a ‘Treatment Plan’. This plan will give the dates of the treatments, and how many of them there will be. You could put them on your calendar, or use Tiger Time so you can see how much treatment your mum or dad has left.

10. What is chemotherapy?  
Sometimes people take medicine called chemotherapy. It uses special kinds of chemicals to destroy cancer cells. It is usually given through a needle inserted into a vein. Your mum or dad with have ‘rounds’ or ‘cycles’ of chemotherapy which means they will be given the medicine one week and left to rest for a while before they have more medicine.

11. What is radiotherapy?  
Sometimes people have radiation therapy, or radiotherapy, to help get rid of cancer cells. It is done with a special machine that is made just for cancer treatment. The radiation (powerful energy rays) is given only to the area of the body where the cancer is. It doesn’t hurt.

12. Does radiotherapy make you radioactive?  
No. Radiotherapy is like an x-ray. It doesn’t hurt. It’s safe to touch the person who has had radiotherapy.

13. What are ‘side-effects’?  
Side effects of cancer treatment happen because the treatment damages healthy cells as well as killing the cancer cells. You will be able to see some of the side effects such as: hair falling out, scars from surgery, mouth sores and weight loss. Other side effects can’t be seen such as: feeling tired, feeling sick, wanting to rest more, not being able to play, feeling weepy and a bit bad-tempered. After your mum or dad has finished with all of their treatments, these things will go away.

14. Why does a person look so sick when the doctors are meant to be fixing them?  
Cancer medicine needs to be very powerful for it to work properly. But because it is so strong it can damage some normal cells, like hair cells or stomach cells, as well as cancer cells. This is why hair sometimes falls out, or people feel sick. Remember that the medicine’s aim is to help make them better and that it is doing them good – even though it may sometimes make them look and feel poorly. It also doesn’t mean the cancer is getting worse. When treatment is over the normal cells will grow back again.

15. If I stop being naughty will it take the cancer away?  
Being naughty or saying unkind things didn’t make your mum or dad have cancer. It was nothing to do with what you did or said.

16. If I wish for the cancer to go away, will it?  
Sadly wishing a cancer away won’t make your mum or dad better. They need proper cancer treatment to help them. You can make other wishes though like ‘I wish that when my mum is better we can go to the beach’.

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Yes, unfortunately children do get cancer. It is rare for children to get cancer. More adults get cancer than children.

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The cancer cells can travel to another part of the body and start growing there. The doctors will be able to know this by looking inside the body.