

*Understanding
The Diagnosis*



Your Life Helper
a compassionate space to grow

You've Received the Diagnosis. Now What?

- Finding out your precious child has been diagnosed with cancer. News that no parent ever wants to hear or is ready to hear.
- This news is going to significantly change what life looks like for you and your family.
- The unknown and uncertainty of what is to come is almost as unnerving as the diagnosis itself.
- Take heart, there are ways to help make this difficult time in your life more manageable.

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Ask Questions!

- Your child's medical team may overload you with information and can make you feel overwhelmed.
- Try to have another person with you (spouse, sibling, parent, friend) to help you take in all the information you will be receiving.
- Take time to process all the information you've been presented.
- Do not hesitate to ask questions or get clarification! Asking questions can help:
 - Gain a better understanding of what type of cancer your child has as well as the treatment options available.
 - Prepare you for what to expect during the treatment process
 - Make informed decisions on your child's treatment plan.

Questions to Ask

Just after receiving the news

- What stage is the cancer at?
- Can you explain to me what the pathology report means?
- What are the treatment options?
- How will this affect my child's daily life?

During the treatment process

- How long will each treatment process take?
- Are there any adverse effects?
- What do I do if my child has difficulty following a treatment?

After treatment

- How often will my child need to visit the doctor to

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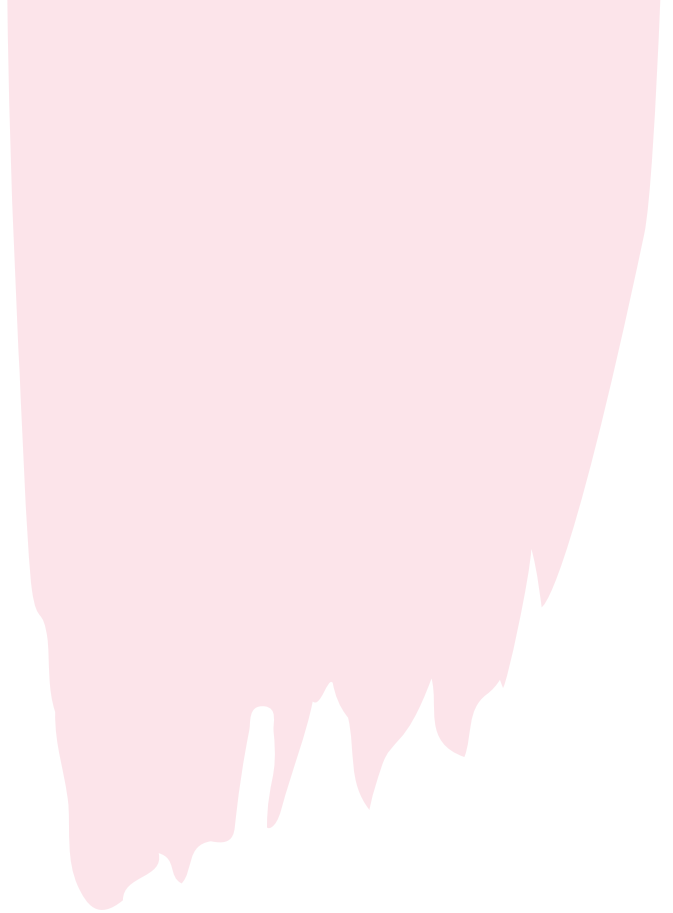
*Don't be
Afraid to get a
Second
Opinion*

- Getting a second opinion can help with coming to terms with your child's diagnosis.
- Try to get a second opinion from a doctor that its knowledgeable on the type of cancer your child has.

(National Cancer Institute, 2015)

Navigating Feelings That May Arise

Shock, fear, denial, anger, and sadness are just a few of the many emotions you may face.



Coping with the mix of emotions

Shock/Denial

- Natural reaction and normal to experience.
 - Allows for time to accept the situation
 - If remains for long period of time could negatively impact your child's health.

Sadness

- Usually comes after the denial phase
 - Normal to feel this way
 - Can be accompanied by negative physical changes (insomnia, lack of concentration, and fear)

Coping with the mix of emotions

Anger

- Normal reaction to an undesirable change within your family
 - Can be internalized or externalized
 - May become more irritable, easily frustrated etc.

Uncertainty

- Common emotion felt by parents following the diagnosis.

Coming to Terms with the Diagnosis

- Remember!
 - Everyone grieves/cope differently
 - There is no “wrong way” to process.
- Take time to grieve but not too long as it can lead to negative outcomes.
 - The Mayo Clinic suggests seeking medical advice/support if you're still severely grieving after 1 year (2021).

Parent's Guide to Age-Appropriate Diagnosis Discussion

Ages 3 and Under

- Infancy- Focus on physical touch and singing.
- Toddler- Focus on play, reassure their feelings and anxiety, provide opportunities for them to choose (when reasonable), talk to them about what to expect.

Ages 3-5

- Ask your child's health care team if they can let your child interact with the different equipment they will be experiencing
- Bring their favorite toy or stuffed animal to comfort them.

Ages 5-12

- Greater understanding of their treatment & condition.
- Want to be in the "loop"
- Maintain contact with close friends and family.
- Encourage them to ask questions about their treatment and diagnosis.

(National Cancer Institute, 2015)

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