

**Pancreatic
Cancer
UK**

Pancreatic Cancer

Treating symptoms and getting support

An EasyRead Booklet

Contents:

This EasyRead booklet is about treating symptoms and getting support for pancreatic cancer.

There are 4 booklets in total.

- [Pancreatic Cancer](#) - What is it? How is it diagnosed?
- [Pancreatic Cancer](#) - Treatment if you can't have surgery
- [Pancreatic Cancer](#) - Surgery to remove pancreatic cancer
- [Pancreatic Cancer](#) - Treating symptoms and getting support

Section	Page
About this booklet	3
Eating and digesting food	4 - 5
Diabetes	6
Other symptoms and side effects	7 - 8
Help and support in your home	9
Coping with pancreatic cancer	10
Talking about it	11
Counselling and Support	12
Depression and anxiety	13
Complementary therapies	14
Prognosis - What is my outlook?	15
Practical support	16 - 17

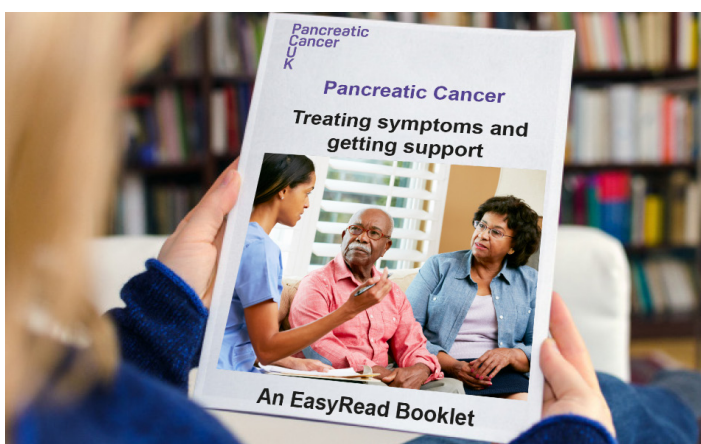
About this booklet



This EasyRead booklet can help if you have just been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

It explains how to deal with some of the symptoms of pancreatic cancer.

It might also be helpful for your family and friends.



There is a lot to take in when you have just been diagnosed.

This booklet will give you the information you need.

It also tells you how to get support to help you cope with the cancer.



If you have any questions about anything you read in this booklet speak to your doctor or nurse.



You can also speak to one of our specialist nurses on our Support Line. They can answer your questions and talk about your worries.

The number is **0808 801 0707**. It is free to call.

You can also email the nurses at: nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk

Eating and digesting food



Pancreatic cancer can cause problems with eating and digesting food.

Your pancreas makes things called enzymes.

These help to break down the food you eat into the nutrients that make up your food.



This is called digestion.

The nutrients are then used by your body to give you energy.



When you have pancreatic cancer it can stop your pancreas from making enough enzymes.

It can also block the enzymes from getting where they need to be.

This can mean that food isn't properly digested.

Some of the symptoms caused by problems with digesting food are on the next page.

Symptoms



- not feeling hungry
- losing weight
- runny poo
- pale, oily, floating poo
- tummy pain or tummy feeling uncomfortable
- bloating and wind
- feeling full up really quickly
- needing to go for a poo urgently, especially after eating.



If you have any of these symptoms tell your doctor or nurse.

They can give you capsules that replace the enzymes. This is called Pancreatic Enzyme Replacement Therapy. Brands include Creon, Nutrizym and Pancrex.



You take them with your food. Your doctor, nurse or dietitian will show you how to take them.

They can make a big difference to how you feel.



If you have any questions, need more help or still have these symptoms then you can call our specialist nurses on our free Support Line on **0808 801 0707**.

You can read about diet on our website at:

www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/diet

Diabetes



Diabetes is a condition where the amount of sugar in your blood is too high.

Your pancreas makes a hormone called insulin. Insulin controls the amount of sugar in your blood.



If your pancreas doesn't make enough insulin, you might get diabetes.



If you are told you have diabetes you should see your GP, diabetes nurse or dietitian.

They can give you treatment if you need it and help you to cope with the symptoms.

Other symptoms and side effects



Some of the other symptoms and side effects that you might get when you have pancreatic cancer are:

Pain which can start off in the tummy, then spread into the back.

You may be given treatment such as painkillers.



Pancreatic cancer can make you **feel very tired**. Try to rest when you are tired, and do things when you are less tired.

Try to do some gentle exercise. It may make you feel better.



Pancreatic cancer and treatments can make you **feel and be sick**.

Tell your doctor or nurse. They can give you medicines to help.



Changes to your poo could be things like:

- finding it hard to have a poo (**constipation**)
- having runny poo (**diarrhoea**)
- pale, oily, floating poo (**steatorrhoea**).

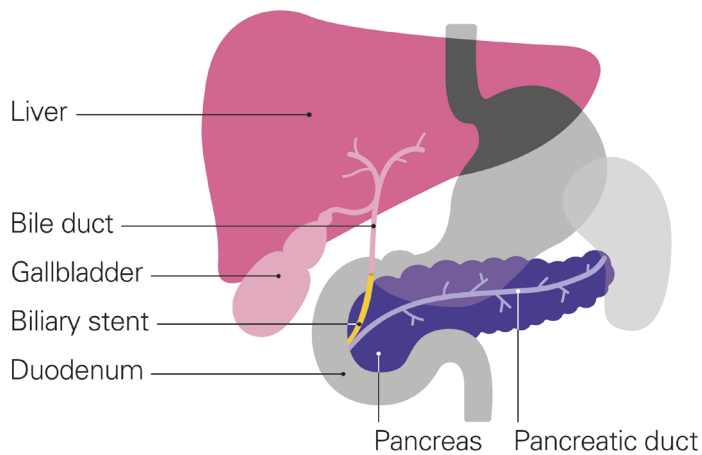
There are medicines to help with these symptoms.



The bile duct is a tube that carries bile from the liver.

If your bile duct is blocked, you may get **jaundice**.

Symptoms of jaundice are yellow skin and eyes and itching.



If this happens, a small tube called a stent can be put into the bile duct.

The stent will unblock the bile duct and will help the jaundice.



If you have any of these symptoms or side effects tell your doctor or nurse.

They will find ways to help you.



If you have any questions you can speak to our specialist nurses on our free Support Line on **0808 801 0707**.

You can read more about treating symptoms at:

www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/managingsymptoms

Help and support in your home



You might find that you need help at home.

This can be things like help giving you medicines, treating symptoms and giving support to help you cope with your feelings.



The nurses that provide this care at home might be called:

- district nurses
- palliative care nurses
- Macmillan nurses.

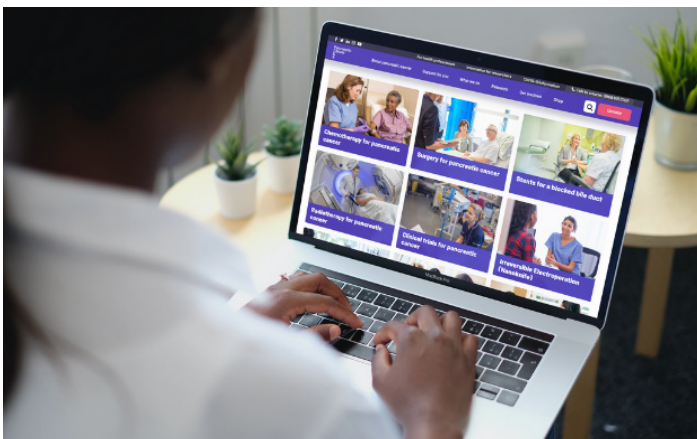
It depends on where you live.

Ask your GP to arrange this if it has not been offered to you.



Practical support like help with equipment, washing and dressing may be provided by social services.

Equipment can be things like rails to help you get out of the bath.



You can find out more about care and support at home on our website at:

www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/care

Coping with pancreatic cancer



Being told you have pancreatic cancer may be a big shock. You may have lots of different feelings.

Your family and friends might also be upset and need some support.



What can help?

Finding out more about your cancer and the treatment you might have can help.



Talk to your doctor or nurse and ask them questions.

This will help you to make decisions about your treatment and help you to plan for the future.



You can also speak to our specialist nurses on our Support Line on **0808 801 0707**. They can answer any questions you may have.

You can also email the nurses at:

nurse@pancreaticcancer.org.uk

Talking about it



Some people find it helps to talk about their cancer and how they are feeling.

Family and friends can be a good support but sometimes people don't know what to say.



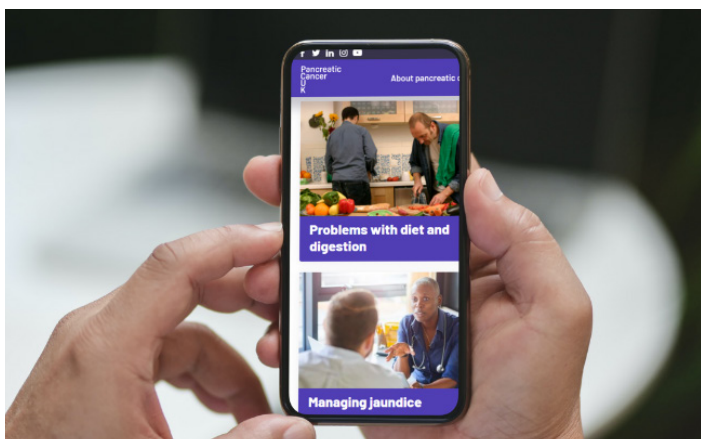
If you don't want to talk to your family and friends, you can talk to your nurse about how you feel.

They can give you support.



You can connect with other people with pancreatic cancer at our Online Support Sessions.

www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/supportsessions



We have an online chat forum. You can chat to others with pancreatic cancer. Your family and friends might find it useful too.

Find out more on our website at:

forum.pancreaticcancer.org.uk

Counselling and Support



Some people find counselling helpful. A counsellor is a trained person who you can talk to about your feelings and worries.

They will listen to you and help you find ways to cope.

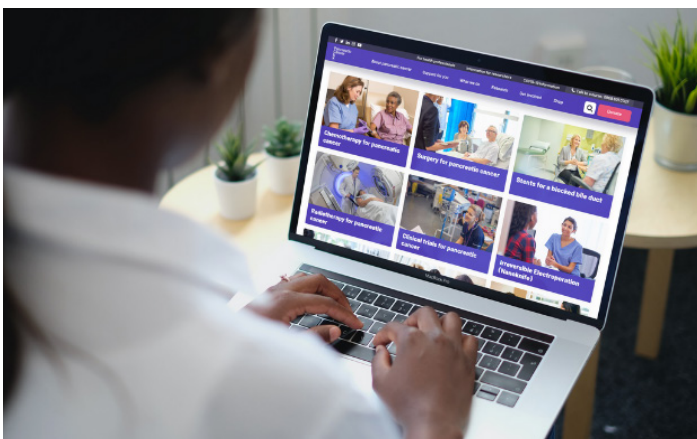


If you want to know more about counselling then speak to your doctor or nurse.

They may be able to arrange this for you.



Charities like Macmillan Cancer Support and Maggie's Centres can also give you information and support.



You can find out more information on our website at:

www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/coping

Depression and anxiety



People with pancreatic cancer may be more likely to worry a lot (anxiety) and feel very down (depression).



If you are feeling worried, upset or down, then speak to your doctor or nurse.

They can try to find ways to help you.



If you are depressed or anxious, getting the right support can help you cope.

You can read about support on our website at:

[www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/
support](http://www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/support)

Complementary therapies



Complementary therapies are a different type of treatment that can be used with normal medicines.

They can help people cope with worries, pain and some symptoms and side effects of treatment.



Some of these therapies are:

- acupuncture
- massage
- meditation
- relaxation therapies.



Speak to your doctor or nurse about complementary therapies that are available in your area.

Some may be available on the NHS.



It is important to let your medical team know of any complementary therapies you are thinking about trying. This is because some complementary therapies can affect your cancer treatment.

You should also tell your therapist about your cancer and treatment.

Prognosis – What is my outlook?



A prognosis is what your doctors think might happen with your cancer.

For example if they think it can be cured or not.



Not everyone wants to know what their prognosis is but if you do then ask your doctor.

They won't be able to tell you exactly what will happen but they can give you an idea of what to expect.



There is a lot of frightening information about pancreatic cancer on the internet.

Not all of it is true, so it's important to speak to your doctor.

Practical support



There is lots of support to help you with practical things like money, work and benefits when you have pancreatic cancer.

We have listed some of them below:



Financial support.

Macmillan Cancer Support and Citizens Advice can give you advice on money and any benefits that you may be able to get.



Blue Badge scheme.

If you can't walk or find it difficult to walk you might be able to get a blue badge. This means you can park in disabled spaces, on yellow lines and other places you wouldn't usually be able to park.



You don't need to be a driver, but you must always be with the person driving if they are using your blue badge. Contact your local council to apply for a blue badge.



Hospital parking and discounts.

You may be able to get free or cheaper parking at hospitals. Check with your hospital.



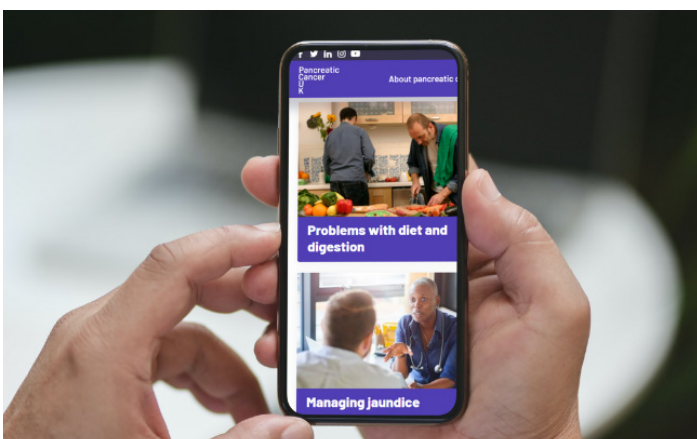
Free prescriptions.

Prescriptions are free in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

If you live in England, you can apply to get your prescriptions for free if you are having cancer treatment.



This means that you won't have to pay for any medicine you need for your symptoms or side effects.



You can find out more information on practical support on our website at:

www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/practical

Pancreatic Cancer UK

This information has been produced by the Support and Information Team at Pancreatic Cancer UK and BTM, who specialise in accessible information.

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