

# Fam Talk

## What to say to your family about your cancer



### How will my family react to the news that I have prostate cancer?

Everyone has a different way of dealing with news that they, a family member, a loved one or friend has any cancer. Many are in shock, disbelief, confusion and even anger when they first learn the news. There is no "right way" for you and your family to feel about your diagnosis. One of the best ways to deal with their feelings is to share them with each other. There are also patient and family support groups available that provide a safe, constructive environment to facilitate education and communication.

### Should I tell my children that I have prostate cancer?

Many parents do not want to burden their children with worries and fears about their cancer. They conceal the truth in hopes of sparing their children some of the pain. However, even the youngest child can sense when something is wrong and a parent is sick. If you don't share the truth, they may imagine that things are worse than they are. Children, especially very young ones, tend to see themselves as the center of the world and they may come to think that they've done something wrong that is causing a problem in the family.

Some parents choose to share their diagnosis with their children. Others may tell only the information they feel their child needs to know. How much you share with your child will depend on age and maturity and how much you feel they can handle. Sharing your medical history and issues with your children is important so they understand any of their future health risks and options.

### How do I tell my family that I have prostate cancer?

Before discussing your cancer with your family, you may want to speak with your doctor, a counselor or another expert about the best way to deliver the news. If you are a member of a support group, other members may be able to offer advice and suggestions as well.

Prepare to offer your family a lot of reassurances. Their questions and concerns will probably center on how their lives, and yours will change.

Try to stay up beat, prostate cancers in most cases are curable with treatment, but also be realistic and honest with your family. Assure them that you will keep them informed of any changes.

### How can my family help me?

Asking you family for help during this time will benefit everyone. Your family wants to give you support, but they aren't sure how. You can assign specific tasks to each family member. For example, if one family member is good at internet searches, have them research treatment options, including brachytherapy. If another family member is particularly organized, ask them to handle medical insurance issues. Have a family member collect and write down questions you and your family may have for your doctor. Take that person with you the next time you visit the doctor. That family member can make sure all of the questions are asked and record the answers.

If a friend asks how they can help, have an answer ready. Don't hesitate to ask for help with any of the daily activities you may need help with like yard work etc.

Unless you opt for seed brachytherapy treatment which will have your back to your normal life in a day or two, your cancer treatment may keep you home or in the hospital for an extended period of time. Not being able to do your normal activities may make you feel useless of "stir crazy". Ask friends and family to make time to visit to help pass the time.

Remember, by accepting the help of others, you'll have more time to focus on getting well.