

## **TIPS FOR TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN ABOUT A CANCER DIAGNOSIS**

- Even though your teen may not want to have long talks about it, keep your teen informed about what's happening with your cancer, treatment, and side effects.
- Tell your teen that you plan to do everything in your power to get better.
- Ask your teen if he/she would like to talk with medical staff, a counsellor, or another teen in a similar situation.
- Invite your teen to attend a medical appointment so that she or he can see where you go for treatment and can have an opportunity to ask questions.
- Suggest that your teen can talk to you about anything, and that the conversation can be returned to again.
- Be available to listen.
- Know that it's ok not to be able to answer a question. Let your teen know you will try to find an answer and get back to him or her.
- It's good to set cancer aside sometimes and just spend time with your teen.
- Your teen may not want to tell everyone, or know what to say. It is important for them to let their friends know what they are comfortable talking about, and what they are not. You could tell your teen:

*“Don't feel obligated to tell everyone everything - or to talk about it. It's ok to have part of your life not about cancer.”*

*“Your friends have their own lives. They may not know what to say. Or they may ask you difficult questions.”*

*“You could go to your teacher, guidance counsellor, or principal for support.”*

(Adapted from Reaching out to your Children When Comes to Your Family. Slakov, J., (2007) BC Cancer Agency, Vancouver)

This is part of a series of FACT Sheets developed by the Patient Family and Counselling Departments, BC Cancer Agency. For further contact information, please access our provincial website at: [www.bccancer.bc.ca](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca)