

## Mental Health & Cancer

Cancer does not just affect your body it can also affect your mind and emotions. Many people can have changes in their mental health and have a difficult time coping when they have a cancer diagnosis. Are you experiencing symptoms such as depression and anxiety? If you are, you are not alone.

Everyone knows it is better to catch cancer earlier. The same is true for mental health conditions. Unfortunately, many people with cancer may not consider getting help for their anxiety and/or depression nor will they get treatment for it. For example, studies (Smith H. R., 2015) show that rates of major depressive disorders are thought to be up to three times higher than in the general population and; youth and younger adults are at risk for depression and other conditions, as compared to adults with cancer (Park, E. M., & Rosenstein, D. L., 2015).

One of the reasons why it is hard to figure out the impact of cancer and mental health is because cancer, depression and anxiety can share similar symptoms such as fatigue, lack of sleep and decreased appetite which can make recognizing mental health conditions difficult. Figuring out what is a normal reaction to a cancer diagnosis and treatment versus signs of a mental health condition can be hard.

However, many people, who get treatment for mental health symptoms, often see improvement in their overall wellness, are more likely to follow through with medical care and have a better quality of life.

### Mental Health Online Resources

[Anxiety Canada](http://AnxietyCanada.ca) has resources and support

- Mindshift App, download it from your App Store. Strategies to help you learn to relax and be mindful, develop more effective ways of thinking and steps to take charge of your anxiety.
- My Anxiety Plan (MAP) Step by step guides for adults and children.

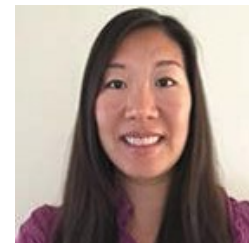
BounceBack® is a free skill-building program to help adults and youth manage low mood, mild to moderate depression, anxiety, stress or worry. The program is delivered online or over the phone with a coach and you will get access to tools that will support you on your path to mental wellness. Take the [Bounce Back Quiz](#) it takes less than 5 minutes.

### How can BC Psychiatry Services help?

A BC Cancer psychiatrist can help with problems with depression, anxiety, sleep, changes in personality, fear of treatment or illness, changes in thoughts and perception, and optimizing psychiatric medications through cancer treatment.

Psychiatrists are medical doctors specializing in mental health and at BC Cancer they can help with the added complications that can arise with having cancer.

### BC Cancer, Psychiatry Services



Dr. Wong completed her residency training at the University of British Columbia where she was

also recognized for excellence through the 2014 Undergraduate Teaching Award. Prior to her medical training, Dr. Wong also completed a Master's degree in Neuroscience at UBC. In addition, she brings much-needed language skills in Cantonese and Mandarin to our Psychiatry service.

### Referrals to BC Cancer Psychiatry Services - talk to your health care team

If you want to be referred to a BC Cancer Psychiatrist, speak with your oncologist, oncology nurse or BC Cancer counselor. Referral forms can also be requested by your family doctor or nurse practitioner. They can call the nearest BC Cancer centre and ask for Psychiatry and Patient and Family Counselling.

## Tips that can help reduce anxiety and stress:

- Think about what you are already doing to help reduce your stress. (e.g. walking, listening to music etc.)
- Try something new. You can start by checking out the [Managing Stress Toolbox](#), taking the [Bounce Back quiz](#) or signing up for a [support program](#).
- Use stress reducing techniques such as deep breathing more often during cancer treatment, waiting for test results and times of high stress. If you practice stress reduction often, you have help when you need it most.
- Regularly check in with yourself to see if what you are doing is making a difference. Notice any changes or additional things you might need to do.
- **Remember that you are not alone**, use supports such as counselling, groups and online courses. Go to our [Emotional Support](#) web page for more information.

### Check out the BC Cancer's [Managing Stress Toolbox](#)

- instructional videos
- audio streaming relaxations
- coloring sheets
- stress reduction exercise sheets
- information on support groups



Use your mobile device to listen to audio relaxations during treatment or waiting for an appointment.

Download the Soundcloud App found in your App Store.



Search Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) Playlists:

⇒ Mindfulness & Meditation

⇒ Relaxation & Guided Imagery

## Find a BC Cancer [Support Program](#)

### Support Programs

Looking for cancer support? Click a button below to see programs offered at our cancer centres. Click a program name to learn more and find out how you can register.

Abbotsford >

Kelowna >

Prince George >

Surrey >

Vancouver >

Victoria >



### Learn more about Coping with Cancer

Go to: [www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/health-info/coping-with-cancer)

### Subscribe to the Supportive Care Newsletter

Go to: [www.bccancer.bc.ca/our-services/services/supportive-care](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/our-services/services/supportive-care) and click on the sign up button.