

# THE FIRST WEEK AFTER DIAGNOSIS

A calm support guide for the days after everything changes

## Before anything else

A cancer diagnosis can make time feel strange. One minute you are listening to words you never wanted to hear. The next, you are expected to understand scans, blood tests, treatment plans, appointments, side effects, family conversations, work decisions, and a future that suddenly feels uncertain.

### **You do not have to understand everything this week.**

You do not have to become an expert overnight.

You do not have to explain it perfectly to everyone.

*This guide is here to help you get through the first few days with a little more steadiness. Not certainty. Not answers to everything. Just something to hold onto.*

## What matters most this week

Your mind may try to do everything at once. That is not weakness. That is shock. For now, the job is not to solve your whole life. The job is to slow things down enough to know what the next step is.

1. What have I actually been told?
2. What do I still need to find out?
3. Who needs to know right now?
4. What is the next appointment or test?
5. What do I need today?

## Write down what you know

**Cancer type**

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**Stage or grade, if known**

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**Where it is, if known**

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**Tests already done**

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**Tests still waiting**

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**Treatment mentioned**

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**Next appointment**

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**Contact person or department**

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## Questions I still have

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## Do not try to tell everyone at once

Telling people can be exhausting. You do not have to update everyone this week. Choose one or two people who can handle the truth without making you manage their emotions.

*"I've had some difficult news. I've been diagnosed with cancer. I do not have all the details yet, and I'm still waiting for more information. I'll update you when I know more, but I may not be able to talk much right now."*

## Be careful with late-night searching

The internet can turn fear into a full-time job. Try not to build your understanding from panic searches at midnight. Write down what you want to ask your medical team instead.

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## Prepare for the next appointment

When you are newly diagnosed, twenty-five questions can feel like twenty too many. Start with the questions that help you understand what is happening next.

- What type of cancer do I have?
- Has it spread anywhere else?
- What stage or grade is it?
- What treatment are you recommending first?
- What is the aim of this treatment?
- What side effects should I expect?
- What symptoms should I report immediately?
- Who do I contact if I am worried between appointments?
- What happens after this appointment?
- Is there anything I need to do before treatment starts?

## Look after the basics, even badly

Try to eat something. Drink water. Take medication as directed. Rest when you can. Write things down. Let one practical person help. Do not make major life decisions at 2am. Do not measure your strength by how calm you look.

*You are allowed to be shaken. You are allowed to function one hour at a time.*

## What can wait

**Work decisions**

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**Money decisions**

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**Family explanations**

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**Long-term plans**

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Other people’s reactions  
What might happen months  
from now

Important contacts

Hospital or oncology  
department

Nurse specialist

GP

Pharmacy

Out-of-hours contact

Emergency number

Main family contact

Person who can help with lifts  
Person who can help with  
admin

A note about safety

This guide is not medical advice. Always follow the advice of your medical team. If you have severe, sudden, frightening, or worsening symptoms, contact your medical team, out-of-hours service, emergency department, or local emergency number. Do not wait for the next routine appointment if something feels urgent.

The appointment takes an hour.  
The waiting takes everything else.

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