

Talking about your illness with your family and those important to you

This leaflet is intended to help you talk with your family and those important to you about your health and your plans for the future. It is based on what you have already talked about with your doctor.

Talking about your health with your family and those important to you may not be easy, but it will help them understand what is important to you. It will also help them support and understand your decisions.

Before you begin, think about where and when you will want to have this talk. Choose a time and place where you feel relaxed. Try to make sure you have enough time to talk to each other.

Some words have been included as suggestions to help you. You can use them or your own words – whatever is easier for you.

Start the conversation

“I am feeling alright at the moment and though there is no hurry/rush, my doctor thinks that we should talk about my future care.”

“We have talked about what things are important to me and my wishes for my future.”

“It will help me to talk about this with you.”

“If at some point I am unable to make my own decisions, I would like you to be able to say what is important to me and what my wishes are.”

What do your family and those important to you understand about your health?

Understanding

“What is your understanding of where I am now with my health?”

Information

“I know that it may not be easy for you, but I would like to talk to you about my illness. Would that be alright with you?”

“Have you any thoughts about how much you would like to know about what is likely to be ahead?”

“My doctor and I have talked about what may happen in the future – can I talk with you about it?”

Share what is important to you

Things that are important and wishes

“Can I share with you some of the things that feel really important to me and that might affect how I make decisions about my treatment and care? Some things I’m looking forward to are...”

Examples: Meeting my new grandchild; celebrating my next birthday etc.

Fears and worries

“My biggest fears and worries about my future with this illness are...”

Examples: Not being able to make decisions for myself, or having to ask others for help with basic needs. Not being able to walk my dog or do my gardening.

Abilities

“I find it difficult to imagine not being able to.....”

Examples: Not being able to recognise or interact with people, not being able to care for myself, go to the football match etc.

Choices

“I know that we may have to choose between more treatment/procedures, which may be hard for me to go through, and having more time together.” Examples: Being in hospital, having a feeding tube, more chemotherapy, etc. “This is what I think about my choices ...”

Plan to talk again

“Do you have any thoughts or questions about what we have talked about?”

“I would like you to be involved with the discussions about my health and care as time goes on. Would that be alright with you?”

“I know this was probably not an easy conversation for you. How do you feel about it?”
“Who else do you think I should talk to?”

“If my health changes significantly I would like to talk with you again.”

Remember to talk again with your family and those important to you as your situation or wishes change

TIPS

Pick a time when you feel relaxed and there will be time to talk to each other.

Choose a place where you are comfortable and where you will not be interrupted.

You can use your own words or you can choose to read the words from this leaflet out loud.

Choose whatever feels right for you and remember it's your conversation.

Notes

It may help you to use this page to write down ideas from your talk, other questions for your doctor, or any other ideas you may have for future conversations.
