

# WHAT IF IT COMES BACK...

## WHAT IS FEAR OF CANCER RECURRENCE?

Fear of cancer recurrence is the fear or worry that cancer could return or spread in the same place or any other part of the body.

Fear of cancer recurrence affects most people after finishing cancer treatment.

It is normal and understandable to be worried about your cancer coming back or progressing.

The diagram below shows common features of fear of cancer recurrence.



## IF YOUR FEAR OF CANCER RECURRENCE IS HIGH, YOU MAY HAVE INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS OR IMAGES ABOUT THE CANCER RETURNING OR PROGRESSING.

- You may be very alert and looking out for physical symptoms
- You might notice aches, pains and changes in how you feel or look
- You might check physical symptoms excessively or avoid symptom monitoring
- You might notice a lot of anxiety about tests, scans, treatment, or medical appointments.

These concerns may impact daily life and cause a lot of distress or anxiety for people with high levels of fear of cancer recurrence.



## **IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT CANCER RETURNING OR PROGRESSING, WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- Acknowledge your fears
  - You might write them down or tell them to a friend or family member. Remind yourself that it's very normal and understandable to be worried about your cancer coming back or progressing.
- Get to know your triggers
  - Be aware of times when your fear will be higher and plan how you will manage your fears at that time. For example, when you have an upcoming scan, you might write your worries down, do things that are important to you, practice your relaxation, and make sure you eat and sleep well.
- Ask questions
  - Write a list of questions to ask your Doctor or medical team.
- Learn the symptoms
  - Ask your doctors what symptoms you need to watch out for, how to check symptoms (if applicable), and how/when to respond to new symptoms. Try to keep to their guidelines, and remind yourself that not all physical symptoms are signs of cancer.
- Do things that are important to you
  - Do things that are important to you, even if you are feeling fearful or worried.
- Talk to someone you trust about your fears
  - People around you might not want to tell you they are also worried about the possibility of your cancer returning or progressing. Let them know how you're feeling and that you'd just like them to listen and hear your concerns.
- Do regular relaxation
  - Do regular relaxation such as calming breathing, or mindfulness meditations. Try to do 5-15 minutes of relaxation each day and immediately when you are having thoughts of recurrence.
- Keep a healthy lifestyle
  - Avoid foods or drinks that increase your anxiety such as caffeine or alcohol. Continue exercising as you usually do. Try to keep to healthy sleep habits.
- Seek help from a mental health professional
  - It can be helpful to contact LLF Support's counsellor about how you are feeling. Contact 97182580 to speak to a trained counsellor.

