Mental health & emotional well-being

You are not "OVERREACTING"

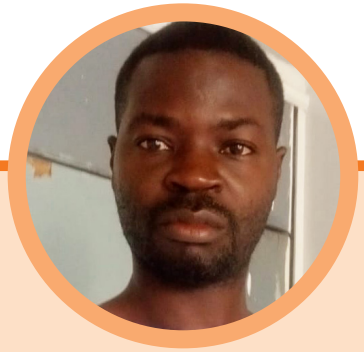
Bladder cancer affects more than the body

A bladder cancer diagnosis not only changes what is happening inside your body. It can also change how you think, how you feel and how you see the future. Many people describe it as a moment when life suddenly feels uncertain, fragile or out of control.

You might feel scared, angry, numb, sad or confused - sometimes all at once. You may worry about treatment, about your family, about work or about whether the cancer will come back. These reactions are extremely common and completely understandable. Living with cancer means living with uncertainty, and that is emotionally demanding.

What you are feeling is not a personal failure. It is part of being human in a difficult situation.

People living with bladder cancer often go through waves of emotions. Some days you may feel strong and hopeful. On other days, the fear or sadness may feel heavier. Both are part of the journey.



"I felt an initial shock followed by fear and anxiety about the unknown. Sadness also settled in. I felt anger, frustration, isolation, resignation and a desire to fight."

Jean, bladder cancer patient
(Democratic Republic of the Congo)

When your mind feels on high alert

Bladder cancer often comes with repeated tests, cystoscopies, scans, and long periods of waiting. Even when treatment is finished, follow-up continues. This can make it hard to fully relax.

Many people notice that anxiety increases before appointments or test results. This is sometimes called scanxiety - the tension and fear that builds while waiting to hear if everything is okay.

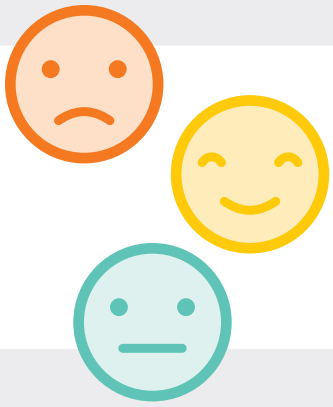
Over time, this constant uncertainty can lead to low mood, exhaustion, or feeling emotionally worn down. Some people also struggle with changes in their bodies, energy levels, or sense of identity. It is not uncommon to grieve the life you had before cancer.

"When I received the online letter, I was both overwhelmed and extremely distressed. I was terrified… I didn't know how that delay would affect my outcome."

Cilla, bladder cancer patient
(United Kingdom)

How are you feeling right now?

- ☐ Hopeful
- ☐ Calm
- ☐ Okay
- ☐ Numb
- ☐ Tired
- ☐ Worried
- ☐ Sad
- ☐ Scared



Things that can help

There is no single "right" way to cope with bladder cancer. What helps one person may be different from what helps another. But many people find that small, gentle actions can make the emotional load easier to carry.

Practical ways to support your mental well-being

Tip	Why it helps
Gentle movement (walking, stretching, light yoga, etc.)	Even small amounts of movement can lift your mood, reduce stress and improve energy.
Breathing or relaxation	Slowing your breath can calm the nervous system and reduce anxiety
Writing things down	Journaling helps you process emotions and organise your thoughts.
Talking to someone	Sharing worries with someone you trust helps you feel less alone.
Joining a support group	Talking with others who understand bladder cancer brings comfort and practical advice.
Keeping a simple routine	Daily structure can create a sense of safety and normality.
Doing something you enjoy	Music, nature, or creative activities give your mind a break from cancer.
Resting when needed	Listening to your body helps prevent emotional and physical burnout.

What helps YOU feel a little steadier?

Write down your thoughts

"You have to maintain positivity every single day. You cannot let yourself get down and depressed. Stay strong."

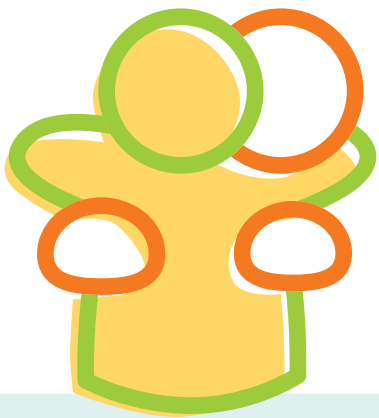
Linda, bladder cancer patient (United States)

You do not have to face this alone

If fear, sadness or anxiety begins to feel overwhelming, it is important to know that help is available. Your mental well-being matters just as much as your physical health.

Your doctor, nurse, or healthcare team can help you find:

1. **Counselling or psychological support**
2. **Cancer support services**
3. **Peer or patient groups**



Questions you might want to ask

- Is it normal to feel this anxious or low?
- Who can I talk to about how I am coping?
- Are there support groups or counselling services?
- What should I do if my worries feel too much?

"I am a member of multiple bladder cancer support groups… The groups I am in follow my progress closely, and I share everything with them, including the wins, setbacks and pain."

Barry, bladder cancer patient (Australia)

You are part of a global community

Connecting with this global community through support groups can be a powerful source of strength and comfort. Online or in-person bladder cancer support groups bring together individuals who are going through similar experiences or have overcome them in the past. Many patients find that support groups fill an important gap that medical care and well-meaning family members may not cover.

The **World Bladder Cancer Patient Coalition** works closely with bladder cancer patient organisations and support groups worldwide. We represent member groups across 14 countries (and growing), collaborating with local advocates to ensure help is within reach wherever you are. To find patient organisations and support in your country, visit our website at worldbladdercancer.org or contact us via email at **patients@worldbladdercancer.org.**

The World Bladder Cancer Patient Coalition gratefully acknowledges the support of our Global Impact Partner: Johnson & Johnson, and our Premier Partners: Astellas and Ferring Pharmaceuticals, and our Sponsor: ImmunityBio.