



Help to cope with coronavirus worry when you're living with cancer

We've been hearing a lot about living with uncertainty over recent days. Every cancer patient knows exactly what this is like. If you're living with cancer, remember the same techniques you find helpful for managing cancer work for managing coronavirus worry as well. We are also aware that having an underlying illness like cancer may mean your risk is increased should you develop the virus. With this realisation, we can experience a rollercoaster of emotions

Things that may help:

- We can only manage what we can control. Worrying thoughts are normal and they will come and go. Try to keep your worry in perspective.
- We can't live in the future, we can only live in the present moment.
- Be careful about how you use social media, there's lots of stuff in there that is sensationalist or untrue. Get your facts from the HSE coronavirus page [hse.ie/coronavirus](https://www.hse.ie/coronavirus)
- Remember nothing lasts forever and this too will pass.
- Fear and panic can be as contagious as the Coronavirus so remember thoughts are not facts.
- Thoughts are just thoughts. We can feed and fuel our fears by how we think. We can manage our thoughts with awareness and balance.
- Remember you have faced threats in the past especially the threat of cancer and have come through it. By follow the advice from the HSE you can also help yourself to feel you can manage this.
- It can be helpful to take a break from all the news and 'chatter' that is occurring all around us. Purposely turn off the phone, don't check social media for an hour or two every day.

- Park your worry by doing some activity every day.
- Physical activity is important so if you are able to follow your normal routine that includes walking outdoors or any home exercises that will help to both to distract you as well as being good for your physical and psychological well-being.
- Remember to use your healthy hobbies as a form of distraction.
- Eating regular meals is very important.
- Good sleep routine is also important in terms of good coping.
- This is just one chapter in our lives. It will not define us.

Finally a calming breathing technique:

When we are feeling anxious and stressed a number of physiological changes can occur in our body.

We may notice our heart beating fast, we may feel warm and sweaty, our muscles may tighten, we may feel light headed or our body can tremble. Psychologically we may notice our thoughts racing and we can feel overwhelmed.

A useful and evidenced based way to counteract these symptoms is to anchor ourselves in the present by focusing our attention on our breathing.

Slow paced breathing counteracts these symptoms. We can slow down our breathing, by breathing deeply and slowly, when we slow our breathing - we slow our heart rate, which in turn calms the body. When the body is calm the mind will follow.

Anchoring Breath

1. ***Inhale for four seconds***
2. ***Pause for two seconds***
3. ***Exhale for five/six seconds***
4. ***Pause for two seconds***

5. ***Repeat this process for as long as you required***

Important note: Be sure to prolong your exhalation action (breathing out) in this activity, this is the part of breathing that slows our heart rate and calms our body.