

Five big issues people with cancer in the UK are concerned about right now

Every year more than [385,000 people in the UK are diagnosed with cancer](#) and there are currently [at least 3 million people living with cancer across the UK](#). Analysis by Macmillan Cancer Supportⁱ shows the following five issues are big concerns affecting people in the UK with some of the most common cancer types: lung, melanoma, breast, and head and neck:

- Travel insurance
- Financial issues such as increased costs and paying bills
- Fatigue and tiredness
- Sleep problems
- Anxiety and depression

Travel insurance a top concern for people with melanoma and head and neck cancer

Getting travel insurance is one of the top concerns people with cancer have faced in as a result of their diagnosis. In a Macmillan survey of more than 2,000 people with cancerⁱⁱ, 23% of respondents highlighted travel insurance as an issue. This rose to 28% of those diagnosed with [head and neck cancer](#) specificallyⁱⁱⁱ, making travel insurance one of the main concerns for people with head and neck cancer.

Travel insurance was also highlighted as one of the top concerns of those with [melanoma](#) (skin cancer), with 22% of people with this type of cancer identifying it as an issue^{iv}. Travel insurance can be more difficult to get if you have cancer. Get more information on [how cancer can affect getting travel insurance](#) and what you need to know before purchasing insurance.

Almost one in three people with lung cancer (30%) are worried about increasing costs

Financial concerns including loss of income, increased costs and ability to meet financial commitments such as [paying bills and housing costs](#) are a primary issue for those with cancer. One in six people with cancer (16%) report increased costs as a concern in recent weeks, rising to almost one in three (30%) for people with lung cancer. Money worries can make coping with cancer more difficult.

A quarter of people with cancer struggle with exhaustion

Physical, emotional, and mental health issues are common concerns for people with cancer, as shown by Macmillan's research. According to its most recent analysis, one in four of those with cancer (25%) say that [feeling exhausted and fatigued](#) has been a concern in recent weeks^v, making it one of the most common physical and emotional issues people are facing.

Fatigue is feeling very tired most, or all, of the time. It is more extreme than everyday tiredness and it can affect your ability to do basic tasks such as getting dressed or brushing your hair. There are many causes of cancer-related fatigue including cancer itself, [cancer treatments](#), and other medical issues such as anaemia.

Feeling tired can be a symptom of lung cancer. Lung cancer is the third most common cancer in the UK. [More than 45,000 people are diagnosed with lung cancer every year.](#)

Fatigue is more common amongst those with lung cancer, with Macmillan's figures showing that two in five people with [lung cancer](#) (39%) have faced concerning levels of fatigue in recent weeks^{vi}.

For people with lung cancer, data from Macmillan's electronic Holistic Needs Assessment (eHNA) tool shows fatigue is a particularly common concern at the point of initial diagnosis. It is the second most common concern reported via the eHNA tool, after breathing difficulties^{vii}. Macmillan's eHNA data shows that the ways in which clinicians try to support people with lung cancer with fatigue include

acknowledging and discussing their concerns as well as signposting to the Macmillan Support Line^{viii}.

Sleep problems a leading issue for people with breast cancer

[Sleep problems](#) are a leading concern for people with cancer in the UK, with Macmillan's analysis showing one in five (19%) report this as a concerning issue in recent weeks^{ix}. Lack of sleep (insomnia) has been linked to a [range of other issues](#), including depression, difficulty concentrating, reduced immune system, and loss of sex drive (libido). Sleep problems were found to be one of the main concerns of women with [breast cancer](#), with 20% identifying it as a top concern in recent weeks^x. Macmillan's eHNA data shows that sleep problems are often a key area of concern for breast cancer patients during and after treatment^{xi}. Some breast cancer treatment can cause permanent or temporary menopause, or menopausal symptoms, which can cause trouble sleeping.

A fifth of people living with cancer also dealing with fear and anxiety

Cancer can be physically and emotionally hard to cope with. A fifth of people with cancer (20%) say worry, fear and [anxiety](#) has been a concerning issue in the past few weeks as a result of their cancer or its treatment^{xii}. According to data from Macmillan's eHNA tool, when it comes to breast cancer, these issues often peak at the start of treatment^{xiii}.

Impact of cancer on intimate relationships and fertility

As well as the issues highlighted above, [cancer can also affect several areas of a person's sex life](#) including physical and emotional elements. This can be a result of treatments such as surgery; changes in appearance; or the impact of cancer and its treatment on people's personal relationships.

Analysis of Macmillan's eHNA data shows concerns around sex, intimacy and fertility are relatively common among those with urological cancers^{xiv}. Urology is the area of

medicine that deals with the kidneys, ureter, bladder, prostate, and male reproductive organs.

Macmillan offers a range of services to support people with cancer and their loved ones, including our confidential [Macmillan Support Line](#).

Help us do whatever it takes for people living with cancer by [donating](#) to Macmillan Cancer Support.

ⁱ Macmillan Cancer Support/YouGov survey of 2,050 adults in the UK who have had a cancer diagnosis. The vast majority of fieldwork was undertaken between 31st May and 15th June 2022, with a small additional sample surveyed on 9th and 10th July 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of people living with cancer in the UK.

ⁱⁱ As per ref i. Respondents were shown a list of possible physical and emotional concerns they could have been experiencing in the past few weeks as a result of their cancer or its treatment; the figures reported here refer to those that respondents selected as being either 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale related to their level of concern, equating to being of 'moderate concern'

ⁱⁱⁱ As per ref i. Survey included 56 respondents living with head and neck cancer

^{iv} As per ref i. Survey included 171 respondents living with melanoma

^v As per ref i

^{vi} As per ref i. Survey included 66 respondents with lung cancer

^{vii} Based on responses from 3,947 holistic needs assessments completed by lung cancer patients on Macmillan's eHNA platform between January 2022 and 1 September 2022 across the UK. "Tired, exhausted or fatigued" was reported as a concern in a total of 479 assessments carried out at the point of initial diagnosis

^{viii} As per ref vii

^{ix} As per ref i

^x As per ref i

^{xi} Based on responses from 42,468 holistic needs assessments completed by breast cancer patients on Macmillan's eHNA platform between 2019 and 1 September 2022 across the UK. Sleep problems were reported as a concern in 8,839 of these assessments. When looking at specific stages of a person's diagnosis and treatment, sleep problems were reported as a concern in 21% of assessments carried out during treatment (1,824/8,643) and in 24% of assessments carried out at the end of treatment (3,819/15,661)

^{xii} As per ref i

^{xiii} As per ref xi. Worry, fear or anxiety was reported as a concern in 28% of assessments carried out at initial diagnosis (3,104/11,100), 35% of assessments carried out at the start of treatment (1,305/3,743) and 29% of those carried out at the end of treatment (4,529/15,561)

^{xiv} Based on responses from 38,985 holistic needs assessments completed by urology patients on Macmillan's eHNA platform between 2019 and 1 September 2022, across the UK. Overall, sex, intimacy or fertility was raised as a concern in 4,683 assessments (12%)