

# A GUIDE TO CANTEEN

For parents  
and carers

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# Acknowledgement of Country

Canteen acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples and sovereign Custodians of this land. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We are committed to providing inclusive and appropriate support for First Nations young people, their kin and community impacted by cancer. First Nations peoples are respectfully advised this resource may contain images, names or stories of people who have passed away.

*Ngalaya (Dharawal for ally or friend in battle), is an artwork commissioned by Canteen created by Kamilaroi and Jerrinja woman and artist Jasmine Sarin.*



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MedAdvisor has partnered with Canteen to relieve people living with cancer from the stress of managing their medication, so that they can focus on spending time with their loved ones and doing the things they enjoy. [mymedadvisor.com](http://mymedadvisor.com)

This resource is printed on 100% recycled paper as part of our [CanGreen Action Plan](#). December 2022.

# About Canteen

**Canteen is the only organisation in Australia dedicated to providing tailored support for young people impacted by cancer. We work with 12-25 year-olds who:**

- have/had cancer.
- are dealing with a parent's or sibling's cancer.
- are coping with the death of a parent or sibling.

We also provide services for parents dealing with cancer in their family, because our research shows that when parents are supported through cancer, their children cope much better as well.

We use an evidence-based approach to ensure our services achieve the best outcomes for the young people and parents we support.

**Canteen understands that when cancer crashes into a family's world, it can turn everything upside down. Cancer is the last thing anyone wants in their life, but now that it's here, we can help you deal with it. This guide tells you a bit about us, our services, how it all works and we've also got some tips for you as parents.**

**“I strongly recommend getting involved with Canteen to any family battling cancer. Because the thing is, when you’re diagnosed with cancer, it’s as if everyone around you starts talking in a different language. But Canteen is like a translation service for teenagers – it allows them to communicate at their own level in language that is age appropriate and applicable to them.”**

Mary – mother of 3



## Support for you

Whether you’re dealing with your own diagnosis or cancer in your family, our support services are here for you as parents and carers.



### Cancer Hub

Cancer in the family brings immense challenges. Finding support shouldn’t be one of them. That’s why Canteen, Camp Quality and Redkite are working together to deliver Cancer Hub. It’s a one stop shop to help families impacted by cancer more easily access the practical and emotional support they need. [cancerhub.org.au](https://cancerhub.org.au)



### Counselling

Our counsellors and psychologists can help you manage your own mental health and support you through the parenting challenges cancer can bring. They’re available six days a week for phone, email and online counselling. Face-to-face sessions are also available at most Canteen offices during normal business hours. To speak with a Canteen counsellor about parenting or carer challenges, call 1800 945 215.



### Online support

Parenting through Cancer, brought to you by Canteen and Camp Quality, is an online community where parents impacted by cancer can connect with each other, find evidence-based resources and chat to a counsellor.

This community can help you with difficult topics such as:

- telling your children you have cancer;
- talking to your child about their diagnosis;
- maintaining family routines when going through cancer;
- returning to ‘normal’ after cancer is gone; and
- managing grief and bereavement after losing a family member.

The community is for all parents impacted by cancer with children aged 0-25. [parentingthroughcancer.org.au](https://parentingthroughcancer.org.au)



### Parenting through Illness webinars

Our webinar series provides practical tools, strategies, resources and services for parents impacted by a significant illness. Supported by Metricon. [canteen.org.au/parentingwebinars](https://canteen.org.au/parentingwebinars)

## Tips for you if you have been diagnosed

- 1 Prioritise open and honest communication with your family. Talking about cancer with your children can be incredibly difficult, but it's the best way to help them cope. Find out more on [parentingthroughcancer.org.au](https://parentingthroughcancer.org.au).
- 2 Some families find it helpful to agree on a certain day and time to talk about cancer stuff. This can make it easier to start conversations, but also creates permission to focus on 'normal life' at other times.
- 3 Your children may ask questions you don't know the answer to, or don't want to answer straight away. Tell them you need to check or think about it and that you'll come back to them. You could say something like, "That's a really good question and I don't know the answer so I would like to talk to Dad/Mum/the doctor about it. I'll let you know what they say".
- 4 Tell your children about possible physical changes or side effects in advance, this can help them feel less worried down the track. If they're not prepared, they can mistake normal side effects as signs that your cancer is getting worse.
- 5 Offering your children the chance to see the hospital and meet your doctors and nurses before you start treatment can help their understanding of what's going to happen. It's also a good idea to prepare them for what they might see when they visit you in hospital, for example that you'll be hooked up to an IV drip.
- 6 Family and friends are usually keen to help, but don't know how. So be specific and let them know what you need. Tools like the CanDo app ([candoapp.com.au](https://candoapp.com.au)) and Gather My Crew ([gathermycrew.org.au](https://gathermycrew.org.au)) let you easily ask your social network for help on day-to-day tasks, while removing the awkwardness of face-to-face conversations.
- 7 Make a list of all the things that need to be done – anything you need to organise for your treatment, childcare, household chores, etc. Decide which ones are most important for you to do, which ones someone else can do, and which ones can wait.



**“When you’re going through a cancer experience in the family, you miss out on so much. It’s hard to focus on things like school and socialising with friends. But thanks to Canteen I’ve been given a safe space and many opportunities to make up for what I’ve missed out on. I can now move forward.”**

**Harry, Canteen youth ambassador**



# Support for your children

We understand that every young person deals with cancer differently. That's why we work with each young person individually to develop a support plan that meets their unique needs and goals.

Canteen offers a wide range of support options and all of our services are completely free. To get in touch about support for your children, call 1800 226 833.



## Counselling

Our counsellors and psychologists are trained to help develop strategies for young people to deal with the impact of cancer. They're available six days a week for phone, email and online counselling. Face-to-face sessions are also available at most Canteen offices during normal business hours.

[canteen.org.au/counselling](https://canteen.org.au/counselling)



## Online support

Canteen Connect is a secure, online community available 24/7 where young people impacted by cancer can connect with others in a similar situation, check out events around the country or online and chat to a counsellor.

[canteenconnect.org](https://canteenconnect.org)



## Youth-friendly resources

We provide a wide range of resources to help guide young people through the many challenges cancer brings – from how to talk to friends about cancer to what all the medical jargon means. Visit the website to read, download or order hard copies.

[canteen.org.au/resource](https://canteen.org.au/resource)



## Events and programs

Canteen offers a variety of events and programs tailored to a young person's age and cancer experience.

[canteen.org.au/programs](https://canteen.org.au/programs)

### Events

To give young people some much-needed space away from the daily pressures of living with cancer, we run everything from bowling to cooking classes and casual 'drop-ins' at your local Canteen office. If it's tricky to get to a face-to-face event, Canteen Connect ([canteenconnect.org](https://canteenconnect.org)) helps young people socialise from the comfort of their couch with online events like book clubs, gaming nights and crafting sessions.

### Programs

We offer online, overnight and weekly group programs which allow young people to socialise with others who 'get it' while also developing coping skills and resilience that will last them a lifetime.

Canteen also provides programs specifically designed for young people dealing with:

- having cancer.
- life after cancer treatment.
- their parent having cancer.
- their sibling having cancer.
- grief and loss.

Canteen's events and programs are held in all states and territories, including in regional and remote areas. To find out more or to get your child involved, call 1800 226 833.



## For your child during treatment and beyond

Canteen provides a range of specialist services for young people diagnosed with cancer, learn more at [canteen.org.au/youngpatients](https://canteen.org.au/youngpatients)

### Youth Cancer Services

Specialist treatment and support for young people with cancer aged 15-25 is provided by the Youth Cancer Services (YCS) based in major hospitals throughout Australia. The YCS receive federal funding through Canteen as well as state and territory government funding. [youthcancer.com.au](https://youthcancer.com.au)

### Robots Service

Canteen's innovative robots use video-conferencing technology to enable young people to attend school from their hospital bed or from home, allowing them to stay connected to their school and friends, and maintain daily routines so they can continue feeling a sense of normalcy. [canteen.org.au/robots](https://canteen.org.au/robots)

### Education and Career Support

Our Education and Career Support Service (ECS) helps young cancer patients aged 15-25 get back to study, work and life. This service helps mitigate the long-term impacts of cancer by supporting young people to reengage with tertiary education or redefine career aspirations while overcoming complex barriers. [canteen.org.au/ecs](https://canteen.org.au/ecs)



## How you can help Canteen

Canteen relies on the generosity of the Australian community to continue our vital work. Find out how you can get involved and help us support families affected by cancer.

### Donate today

Make a single donation or commit to a monthly gift to make a real difference to the lives of young Aussies affected by cancer. [canteen.org.au/donate](https://canteen.org.au/donate)

### Fundraise for us

Raise it for Canteen by hosting an event at work or in your local community, running a marathon, shaving your head or collecting donations in lieu of birthday or wedding gifts. [raiseit.org.au](https://raiseit.org.au)

### National Bandanna Day

Host a fundraiser for National Bandanna Day or buy a bandanna from our online shop to show your support. [bandannaday.org.au](https://bandannaday.org.au)

### Volunteer with us

At Canteen we know that the people who make up our team are crucial to us delivering the best programs, services and resources. If you're interested in volunteering for us, visit [canteen.org.au/volunteers](https://canteen.org.au/volunteers)



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## Refer to Canteen through Cancer Hub

You can now refer to Canteen through Cancer Hub, a collaboration between Canteen, Camp Quality and Redkite. Cancer Hub is a digital one stop shop where specially trained staff identify every family member's needs and then actively help them access the practical and emotional support they need, regardless of which community-based organisation provides the service.

- 1 Get permission to provide us with details
- 2 Fill in the easy online form at [cancerhub.org.au/refer](https://cancerhub.org.au/refer)
- 3 Cancer Hub staff will get in touch in 1-2 business days

To find out more about Canteen support services, visit [canteen.org.au](https://canteen.org.au) or call 1800 226 833.

