



Help us help them

Supporting young people when
a parent has cancer

Did you know that:

- CanTeen supports young people who have a parent with cancer?
- If a parent dies from cancer, CanTeen provides bereavement support?
- CanTeen also supports young people dealing with a sibling's cancer or death from cancer?
- There is specialist, age-appropriate treatment and support available for young cancer patients through the hospital-based Youth Cancer Services?

Impact of a parent's cancer

Every year, 21,000 young Australians aged 12-25 hear the devastating news that their Mum or Dad has cancer (that's 58 young people every day).

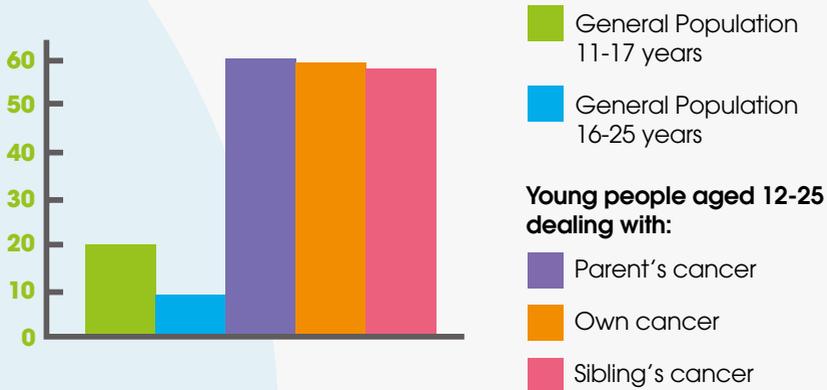
CanTeen conducts leading edge research into the emotional and social impacts of cancer.

Our studies clearly demonstrate that young people dealing with a parent's cancer are three to six times more likely to experience high or very high levels of psychological distress than their peers.



Levels of distress

Percentage of young people experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress*

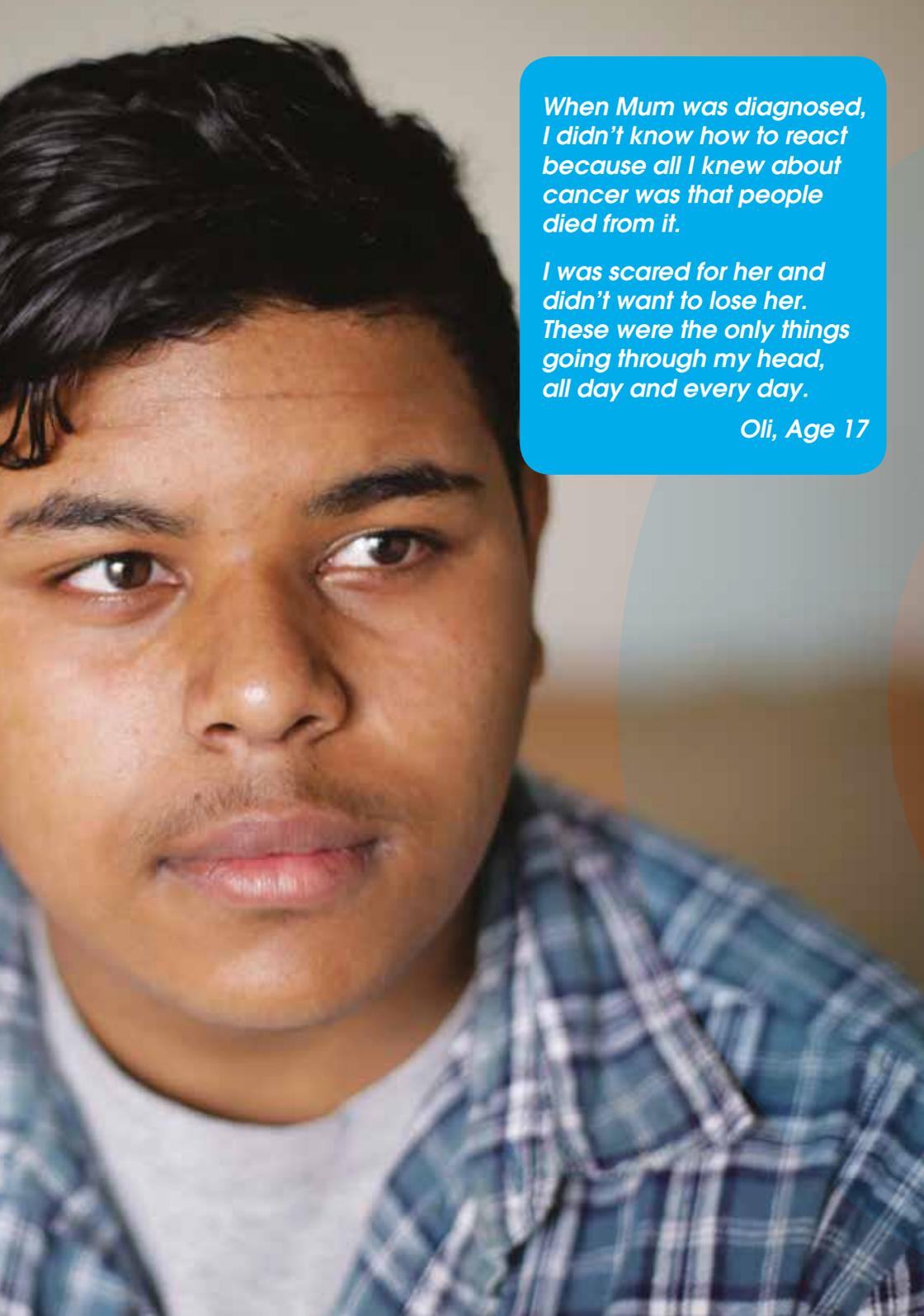


Without support, high levels of psychological distress can lead to difficulties at school or uni, problematic coping strategies such as drug or alcohol abuse as well as depression and anxiety.

Many young people affected by cancer feel very alone and become disconnected from their friends, which can lead to social isolation and an increased risk of mental health issues.

*References:

- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011) Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2011. Cat. no. PHE 140 Canberra: AIHW.
- Lawrence D, Johnson S, Hafekost J, Boterhoven De Haan K, Sawyer M, Ainley J, Zubrick SR (2015) The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents. Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Department of Health, Canberra.
- McDonald FEJ, Patterson P (2015) Evaluation of a resource for adolescents and young adults diagnosed with cancer. J Ped Oncol Nurse, doi: 10.1177/1043454214563408.
- Patterson P, McDonald FEJ, White KJ, Walczak A, Butow PN (under review) Levels of unmet needs and distress amongst adolescents and young adults (AYAs) impact by familial cancer.



When Mum was diagnosed, I didn't know how to react because all I knew about cancer was that people died from it.

I was scared for her and didn't want to lose her. These were the only things going through my head, all day and every day.

Oli, Age 17

We need your help

Young people dealing with a parent's cancer are falling between the cracks.

Since very few young people take their Mum or Dad to and from treatment or medical appointments, they may never be seen by a health professional.

Young people are also unlikely to ask for support and it's very common for parents to underestimate the impact of cancer and think that their children are coping quite well.

In reality, evidence suggests that many young people try to protect their parents by hiding their distress, 'staying strong' and just not talking about any difficult thoughts or feelings.

You can make sure young people don't suffer in silence by connecting the family with CanTeen.

What does CanTeen do?

CanTeen is a national charity that has been supporting young people living with cancer for more than thirty years.

Through CanTeen, young people develop skills to cope with the impact cancer has on their life and connect with others their age who are in the same boat.

We work with 12-25 year olds who are dealing with:

- A parent or sibling's diagnosis
- The death of a parent or sibling
- Having cancer themselves

There's no one size fits all. Our specially trained youth and social workers assess each young person's level of distress and unmet needs to develop an individually tailored care plan.

What you can do

You can help your patient and their children by encouraging the family to have open and honest conversations about cancer and suggesting that they seek support (even if they are reluctant to talk about it).

You can also:

Connect the family with CanTeen

Encourage your patients to call CanTeen on **1800 835 932** (ideally with their children) or find out more about our services at canteen.org.au

Order CanTeen resources

CanTeen provides a wide range of resources to help guide young people through the challenges of cancer. See our full range of books and order free copies at canteen.org.au/resource

Organise a CanTeen visit

Depending on your location, a CanTeen staff member can come to your hospital to meet the family or deliver a tailored session to staff about the impact of a parent's cancer and the support that's available.

Call us on **1800 835 932** or email support@canteen.org.au





Contact us

For more information about CanTeen

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Email support@canteen.org.au

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