



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Cancer Support Groups

These groups bring together people affected by cancer to share experience and navigate the physical, emotional, and practical weight of a diagnosis. The shock of diagnosis, the demands of treatment, changes in body and function, and the fear of recurrence create a distress that is hard for others to fully understand. They come in two forms. Peer-led groups offer community without a treatment curriculum. Professionally led groups, often in oncology settings, add psychoeducation or structured therapy led by oncology social workers, psychologists, and nurses. Groups offered by Cancer Care, the Cancer Support Community, and disease-specific organizations.

WHO IT'S FOR, AND WHO IT'S NOT

- A fit for anyone affected by cancer who wants peer connection and community.
- Works alongside oncology medical care and individual counseling.
- Significant depression, anxiety, or PTSD may call for individual treatment too.

What it's for

People at any stage: newly diagnosed, in treatment, post-treatment, or living with advanced cancer.

Groups may be diagnosis-specific or open to anyone with any cancer.

Caregiver and family groups are listed separately.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 Sessions run 60 to 90 minutes, in person and online.

2 Peer groups are open sharing; professionally led groups may follow a curriculum.

3 Online groups help those in active treatment, immunocompromised, or far from a program.

Cancer support groups have a meaningful, member-valued evidence base.

- A scoping review of groups for advanced cancer found **greater connection, reduced existential distress, and better relationships** with family and providers.¹
- The broader peer support literature confirms gains in **social support, hope, empowerment, and self-management**.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

Match the group to your stage. Newly diagnosed and metastatic needs differ a lot.

Consider diagnosis-specific. It allows focused talk about treatments and side effects.

Online keeps you connected. Useful when treatment or immunity keeps you home.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1** Is this peer-led or facilitated by an oncology clinician?
- 2** Is it specific to my diagnosis or stage, or open to all?
- 3** Is it offered in person, online, or both?

Ready to find a group?

Browse 2,000+ therapy and support groups in all 50 states.

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If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact. Sources on page 2.



Sources

Cancer Support Groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Li, Z., Laginha, K.-J., Boyle, F., et al. Professionally led support groups for people living with advanced or metastatic cancer: a systematic scoping review. *Journal of Cancer Survivorship* (2024), 19(3), 957–977.
- 2 Lyons, N., Cooper, C., & Lloyd-Evans, B. A systematic review and meta-analysis of group peer support interventions for people experiencing mental health conditions. *BMC Psychiatry* (2021), 21(1), Article 315.

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