

Support Services You Can Count On

By Therese M. Hanley, NP and Kimberly Y. Willis, NP
Commonwealth Atrius Cancer Center



Weymouth -Remember: you are not alone. Whether you're newly diagnosed with cancer or a cancer survivor, many local resources are available to help in your quest to get well and stay connected.

Your team of caregivers starts with you, and we encourage you to be proactive in your care. Of course, your doctors and nurses will review your illness and treatment options with you—and the support doesn't stop there. Numerous local support services can help you discuss your feelings and develop coping skills. While it's hard to face this challenge by yourself, you'll find people who care and are ready to help.

How to Take Control

Knowledge is power, and there's no limit to the amount of information you can gather through web sites, support services and other available resources. There's also no set time for when to take advantage of this support. Since all this information can be overwhelming, you should follow your own time frame. Take one step at a time and seek services when you're ready.

Depending on your needs, you can find services specifically catered to you. These include groups that are formal or informal, open or closed, and organized by cancer type or stage. Other groups focus on therapy, peer support, education on your disease, coping skills and care giving. Additional resources include literature, counseling, telephone support groups and online support groups.

These are all ways to help you better control your situation. You benefit by connecting with others during what can be an isolating experience and you have others to lean on during

hard times. You'll also discover that cancer survivors are in a unique position to share experiences and insights. Further, you can find answers to questions you or loved ones might have.

Where to Get Help

You can turn to local cancer centers and networks, hospitals, senior citizen service organizations, hospices and Visiting Nurse Associations. In addition, useful web sites include Commonwealth Hematology-Oncology (www.chomed.com), Commonwealth Atrius Cancer Center (www.commonwealthatrius.com), American Cancer Society (www.cancer.org), and National Comprehensive Cancer Network (www.nccn.org).

Examples of ongoing local groups and programs are "Good Grief" at the Commonwealth Atrius Center in Weymouth, "I Can Cope" through the American Cancer Society and breast cancer support groups and cancer survivor networks.

The following are additional resources available to South Shore residents:

Local Hospitals

South Shore Hospital, www.southshorehospital.org, (781) 340-8000

Quincy Medical Center, www.quincymc.org, (617) 773-6100

Milton Hospital, www.miltonhospital.org, (617) 696-4600

Senior Citizen Service Organizations

South Shore Elder Services, Inc., Braintree, MA, www.sselder.org, (781) 848-3910

Apria Healthcare, Norwood, MA, www.apria.com, (781) 551-4415

HESSCO Elder Services, Sharon, MA, www.hessco.org, (781) 784-4944

Whittier Health Network, Marion, MA, www.whittierhealth.com, (508) 748-3830

Hospices

Hospice of the South Shore, Braintree, MA, www.southshorehospital.com, (781) 794-7877

Hospice of Boston & Hospice of Greater Brockton, Brockton, MA, www.hospiceboston-brockton.com, (617) 439-4419

Old Colony Hospice, Stoughton, MA, www.oldcolonyhospice.org, (781) 341-4145

Yes, there's a daunting amount of information and resources out there. But you need to start somewhere, see what works best for you and then decide about additional support.

As the American Cancer Society says, “Having cancer is hard...finding help shouldn't be!”

About The Author

Therese M. Hanley, NP and Kimberly Y. Willis, NP are Nurse Practitioners at the Commonwealth Atrius Cancer Center (CACC) in Weymouth. For more information, visit www.commonwealthatrius.com, www.chomed.com, and <http://www.atrusheralth.org>. Or call CACC at 1-888-829-8252.