

Beyond School

If your son or daughter has finished school there are still many issues to consider. Parents play an important role as they guide their young adult into the adult world of education, employment, relationships, independent living, finances and healthcare.

Whether or not your son or daughter wants to share aspects of their cancer treatment and experience is a personal choice. This includes communicating information to employers, higher educational institutions, friends and family.

Some young adults are happy to talk about the many aspects of cancer while others prefer to keep the information private. Sometimes it can be difficult for both the young adult and the parent to grasp what should and should not be communicated.



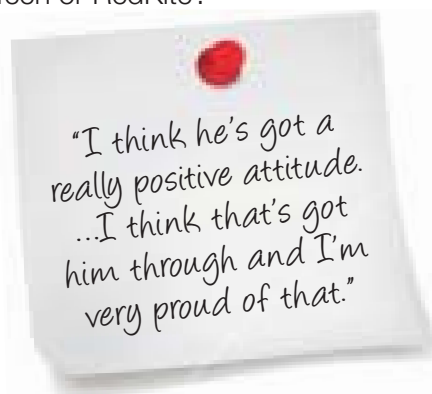
Some considerations to keep in mind when deciding what information is passed on to others include:

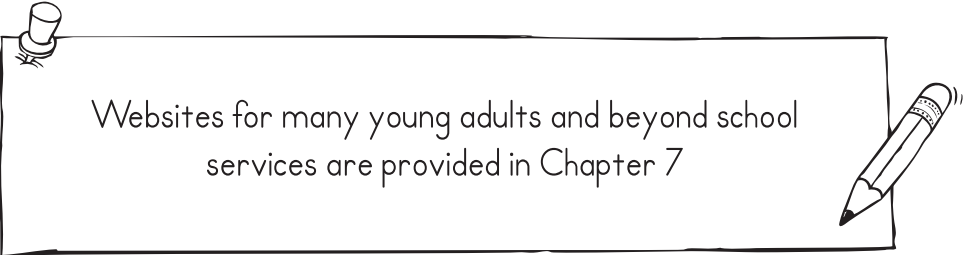
- Is there a medical need that others should be aware of e.g.: daily medication requirements or activity restrictions?
- How will frequent absences from work or university be managed?
- Do you need to have your employer's support?
- Are there legal reasons associated with communicating or withholding information e.g.: for travel insurance or bank loans?
- Would it be helpful to request a letter from the oncologist to explain absences, health status, restrictions or medical needs?



Ways that you can help your son or daughter:

- Do they have a calendar or diary to mark treatment dates, planned visits to the hospital etc.
- Explain how **Medicare** and **Health Funds** work. Ensure your son or daughter has and carries their own Medicare card.
- **Reach out to others** for support from both friends and the broader community.
- There are many different types of **allowances and pensions** that may be available to a young adult including:
 - disability payments
 - health care cards
 - youth allowance
 - mobility allowance
 - rental assistance
- Encourage your son or daughter to contact Centrelink directly to discuss what services may be available. Assist with the preparation of required paperwork.
- Discuss **medical restrictions** which may apply to sport or physical activities.
- Ensure your son or daughter knows who to call in an **emergency**.
- **Talk regularly** about how things are going. Ask them about what is going well and what may be difficult for them.
- There are various services and organisations available to assist with managing higher education, apprentices and the transition to work. e.g.: The University Educational Access Schemes & Special Considerations programs. Assist your son or daughter to explore the various options that may be available.
- Discuss their options with key people at your child's school as they approach the end of their final year.
- Consider whether any scholarships may be available to assist with the early years beyond school e.g.: RMHC Charlie Bell Scholarship or The Redkite Education Scholarship.
- Would your son or daughter benefit from involvement in a support group such as CanTeen or RedKite?





Websites for many young adults and beyond school services are provided in Chapter 7

Is more help needed?

Young adults may need ongoing support from parents and other professionals. There may be times when everything seems to be progressing well and then out of the blue everything seems to be falling apart.

You can discuss these concerns with:

- A University or TAFE Counsellor
- Your doctor
- Oncology social worker
- Oncology psychologist
- A private psychologist
- Friends and family
- Transition Care Coordinators (NSW Health)

If issues become more serious and involve workplace discrimination or medical complaints, contact can be made with:

- The Australian Human Rights Commission
- Youth Liaison Officer – NSW Ombudsman



Social and Emotional Changes

Social and emotional development

Social and emotional development from childhood through to adulthood is an ongoing process. Children grow and learn through watching how other children and adults act, react and behave towards each other. For a child who has experienced cancer, this process may be significantly interrupted due to their changed opportunities to interact with others.

Social development:

- Is the way a child learns to get along with others and enjoy the people in their life.
- Involves the child sharing, cooperating, taking turns and negotiating with other children and adults. Many of these skills are developmental and take time to learn.



Social development is strengthened when a child:

- Has secure relationships with parents, teachers and significant others.
- Feels good about himself.
- Has opportunities to play with friends and other children.

Many children with an illness experience difficulty adjusting to their medical condition and may develop poor self-esteem. Most children want to blend in, not be different and not be known as "the kid who had cancer".

Your child may experience:

- A sense of regret for the period of time lost because of the illness.
- Feelings of anxiety and uncertainty in relation to his/her future life.
- A time of mental readjustment as a result of the illness, surgery and/or treatment.
- A more mature response to situations due to their experiences.
- Times where they question whether they still 'fit in' with their friends.
- Periods of trying to manipulate parents and friends.
- Unexpected changes in attitude toward many different things.

Maintaining the child's involvement in school as much as possible is vitally important. Social and emotional well-being will be much improved if peers are accepting of the changes associated with your child's condition such as appearance, attendance, moods etc.