

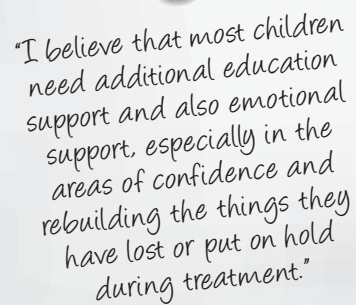
Returning to School

As soon as medically possible it is important that your son or daughter is encouraged to return to school. In the beginning this may be on a part-time or half day basis. School not only provides the opportunity for academic learning, but just as importantly, it is time for your child to be with and learn from their friends and classmates.

Before your child returns to school

- **Request a central contact person** at your child's school for all communication and try to maintain regular contact.
- Meet with the **social worker** from the oncology ward to discuss any concerns and the services that may be available to assist your child and family during treatment.
- If there are ongoing medical issues, arrange for an **Oncology Outreach Nurse** to visit your school to speak to staff and possibly students.
- Ensure the school is aware of the need to notify you immediately of any **infectious illnesses** such as chicken pox. A sample letter that the school can use is included in **Chapter 6**.
- If your child is in preschool or primary school contact Camp Quality to consider arranging for the **McDonald's Camp Quality Puppets** to visit.
- If your child is in High School, contact Camp Quality to consider arranging for the new **Camp Quality High School Performance** to visit.
- Keep a **calendar** at home, to mark treatment dates, planned visits to the hospital, clinic visits and visits to the school.
- The **transition** time from primary school to high school can be a particularly vulnerable time for a child with cancer. Additional communication with both schools will be very important to assist your child through these extra changes in school, routines, peer groups, classes, travel etc.
- Be aware of **siblings'** feelings and reactions. See Siblings Page in this Chapter.
- You may want to request **part time attendance** e.g.: half days, late starts or early finishes.
- Take an active role in any **learning support or team meetings** arranged by the school.
- Ask the school for **extra copies of books** so that your child does not need to carry them to and from school.
- Provide your child and his/her siblings with **age appropriate information** regarding the condition so that they can explain it if they are asked about it.
- Be willing and open to **accept support** from the school community.





"I believe that most children need additional education support and also emotional support, especially in the areas of confidence and rebuilding the things they have lost or put on hold during treatment."

When your child has returned to school

- **Talk regularly** with your child about how things are going. Ask them about what is going well and what may be difficult for them.
- As absences may still occur from time to time, try to **encourage your child** to continue with some aspects of their school work when they are well enough. Work may be provided by the child's school or from the hospital school.
- Be aware that some treatment may cause changes to your child's concentration and organisation skills.
- Contact the **Ronald McDonald Learning Program** (see **Chapter 7**) to arrange an educational catch up program for your child. The majority of children who have received treatment for cancer are eligible for assessment and educational support through this program.
- **Maintain regular contact** with your central school contact person.
- Provide your school staff with the **Information Support Pages** in **Chapter 6** which are relevant to your child's age. These pages provide an overview of cancer treatment issues and support options that school staff may be able to provide.



Do you need more help?

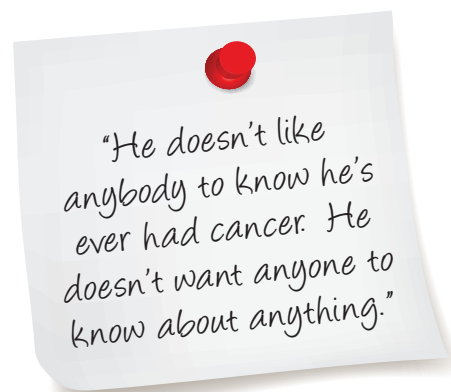
Your child may need ongoing support from parents and other professionals throughout their schooling and development. There may be times when everything proceeds well after returning to school and then out of the blue everything seems to be falling apart. It is very important to keep an eye out for signs that your child is experiencing difficulties. There are many people with whom you can discuss these concerns. Additional support may be required for your child depending on their individual needs.

Signs that your child may need some additional support

- Refusing to go to school even when well enough
- Friendship concerns
- Falling behind
- Lowered test results even after help has been put in place
- Being constantly disorganised or misplacing items
- Not wanting to participate in any out of school activities
- Tears, moods or tiredness which regularly impacts upon school attendance

You can discuss these concerns with:

- Your school counsellor
- Your doctor
- Oncology social worker
- Oncology psychologist
- Classroom teachers
- School principals
- A private psychologist
- Friends and family



Possible support options may include:

- Holding a team meeting with school and possibly medical staff
- Modified school work
- Seeking extra assessments such as occupational therapy or speech therapy
- Seeking a better understanding of learning needs and strengths via an academic, IQ or neuropsychological assessment
- Arranging for individual or group counselling for your child
- Involvement in support groups such as Camp Quality, CanTeen etc.