

LITTLE Ripples

WHY TELLING CHILDREN ABOUT A CANCER DIAGNOSIS MATTERS

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Children cope better when they are included in what is happening at home. Here is what the evidence tells us.

1. CHILDREN SENSE WHEN SOMETHING IS WRONG

Even very young children pick up on changes in routine, mood, and behaviour at home. They notice whispered conversations, tears, and absences. Without an explanation, they often fill the gap with fears that can be worse than the truth.

2. NOT KNOWING INCREASES DISTRESS

Research consistently shows that secrecy and avoidance raise anxiety in children. When children sense something is being hidden, they may feel excluded, blame themselves, or imagine the worst-case scenario.

3. TELLING CHILDREN EARLY HELPS THEM COPE

Studies find that children who are told about a parent's diagnosis in an age-appropriate way show better emotional adjustment over time. Early, honest communication builds trust and gives children a framework to process their feelings.

4. ASKING FOR HELP

When children understand what is happening, they are more likely to express their own needs, ask questions, and accept support from trusted adults, at home and at school.

5. YOUR FAMILY, YOUR WAY

Every child is different. So is every family. The type of information, how much you share, and who shares it, will vary. What matters is that children have the chance to be included, in a way that feels right for them. Your family, your way.

A note about schools and teachers: Letting your child's school know what is happening means staff can offer support. Teachers can watch for changes in behaviour and provide a safe space for your child during the school day.

**YOU DO NOT HAVE TO
FIGURE THIS OUT ALONE.**

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