

# Lifelines

from the National Cancer Institute



## Using the Cancer Information Service: A Reliable and Personal Way to Get Your Cancer Questions Answered

*By the National Cancer Institute*

Your family has just received some unsettling medical news from the doctor that one of your family members has cancer. Right away, some pretty important questions are swirling around inside your head as you move quickly to help that person deal with the news and take the appropriate steps to recovery: what kinds of treatment options are available? How will insurance coverage factor into choices about treatment? Do you get a second opinion and if so, where do you turn? What do they mean when they talk about the “stages” of cancer?

All of these are very important questions that you need answers to sooner rather than later. One of the most reliable – and confidential -- sources you can turn to for answers and basic information about cancer is the National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Information Service (CIS). An information specialist – a live, human voice and not a digitized voice instructing you to punch “1” and punch “2” – will be available to talk with you over the telephone about your family cancer issue. They can also tell you where to access additional information, including a variety of publications and other user-friendly educational materials you can obtain for free or electronically. All of this is just a toll-free phone call away, to 1-800-4-CANCER. This service is up and running every day, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern time. Your tax dollars have already paid for the Cancer Information Service and you should feel comfortable using this toll-free service.

What level of information will you get from calling 1-800-4-CANCER? Because the CIS is part of the National Cancer Institute, the nation’s lead agency for cancer research, you will receive the latest and most accurate information about cancer in clear language that you can understand. They will not talk to you as if you are a doctor or a scientist. CIS information specialists cannot provide medical consultation, but they can give you information on the most recent advances in cancer treatment. And the best thing is they won’t rush you off the telephone like customer service representatives, who are often racing against the clock to meet their quota of service calls. Cancer information specialists will take whatever time you need to discuss your situation.

Your contact with the CIS doesn’t have to be by telephone. It can be via the Internet. You will get the same level of quality service. In fact, you can get answers to your cancer questions by e-

mail and by Instant Messaging. Live online assistance is available through *LiveHelp*'s Instant Messaging service. The Instant Messaging service is available from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Eastern time by visiting [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov) and clicking on the *LiveHelp* online chat link. E-mail help is available through sending a message to [cancergovstaff@mail.nih.gov](mailto:cancergovstaff@mail.nih.gov).

As you can see, accurate and authoritative cancer information is right at your fingertips. It is either a toll-free phone call away or a couple of mouse clicks away. And it comes from the place where cancer research starts and ends for the federal government – the National Cancer Institute.

Finally, while the CIS is a great resource you can depend on, we urge you to not let this serve as a substitute for having a thorough conversation with your doctor about any symptoms you or any of your loved ones may be experiencing when it comes to cancer. Quite simply, there is no substitute for getting medical advice from anyone but a doctor.

We hope the time never comes when you or anyone you are close to are confronted by cancer. But just in case it could happen, you know now where to turn to get the information you will need to make informed and intelligent decisions about the best strategies for getting well.

*NCI leads the National Cancer Program and the NIH effort to dramatically reduce the burden of cancer and improve the lives of cancer patients and their families, through research into prevention and cancer biology, the development of new interventions, and the training and mentoring of new researchers. For more information about cancer, please visit the NCI Web site at [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov) or call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237).*