



# Supporting candidates and employees with cancer

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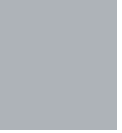
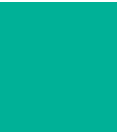


# In this guide:

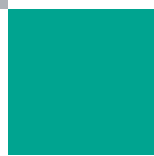
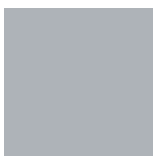
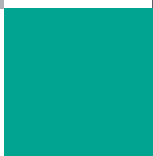
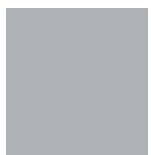
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# Making adjustments – top tips





# Introduction



## **This guide aims to give a general introduction to how cancer might impact someone at work and provide good practice tips on how to support them.**

Diagnosis, treatment and cultural perceptions of cancer may vary between countries. Similarly, legal requirements will also differ: in some countries cancer may not be legally recognised as a disability whereas in other countries, people with these conditions may be protected by local legislation.

Ensuring that you support your candidates and employees with cancer will help you create a more diverse workforce. It's often the case that when a line manager is confident managing a person with cancer they become more effective managers for all employees.

## **Language**

### **Talking about cancer**

Language can be important in creating an open and inclusive workplace for people experiencing cancer.

In this guide we use the term 'cancer' as it is widely understood. However, understanding can differ from country to country and some languages do not have a direct translation for the term 'cancer'.

Some people may use phrases such as 'suffering with cancer'. In this guide we use the more neutral 'employees with cancer'. It is recommended to always use the language that the person with cancer uses to describe themselves and to avoid placing 'labels' on employees.

## Talking about disability

In this guide, we use the term 'disabilities' as used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) [1] ratified by over 175 countries. The UN CRPD Article 1 provides a definition for 'persons with disabilities':

**“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”**

In practice, this could include people with a wide range of impairments or conditions such as dyslexia, diabetes or cancer, to name just a few.

## Talking about adjustments

Adjustments (in some countries referred to as 'accommodations') remove or reduce the effect of the barriers experienced by candidates and employees with disabilities.

Examples of adjustments might include providing a ramp as an alternative to stairs or an electronic version of paper document so that an employee with a visual impairment can use screen reader software to access the information. Working hours and locations can be made flexible, and managers can agree different ways to communicate with their employees e.g. over the phone, via email, face-to-face or in writing.

These are small changes that can remove barriers that stop someone from doing their job and can support good performance. In this guide, we refer to these types of changes as 'adjustments'.

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[1] United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: [un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)

## What is cancer?

Cancer is a disease caused by normal cells changing so that they grow in an uncontrolled way. The uncontrolled growth creates a lump called a 'tumour'. On its own, a tumour can make an individual quite ill, for example by pressing against nerves, blocking the digestive system or blood vessels, or by releasing hormones that can affect the normal workings of the body. If a tumour becomes malignant and spreads to other parts of the body, then this becomes more difficult to treat. This could make the person's life prognosis uncertain.

Cancer affects many people of all ages and it is the second leading cause of death globally [2]. It is estimated that 32.5 million people worldwide live with a cancer diagnosis and that current trends indicate that there will be 23.6 million new cases of cancer each year by 2030 [3].

In addition to the significant physical impact of cancer, there might also exist a psychological impact of a cancer diagnosis.

Different kind of cancers:

**Carcinomas.** About 85% of cancers are carcinomas. They start in the epithelium, which forms the covering of the body (skin) and the lining of the organs in the body.

**Leukaemia.** Leukaemia affects the tissues where white blood cells (which fight infection in the body) are formed, i.e. the bone marrow and lymphatic system. Leukaemia and lymphoma are quite rare and make up about 6.5% of all cancers.

**Lymphomas and myelomas.** These two types of cancer affect the immune system. Lymphomas (5% of cases) and myelomas (1% of cases)

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[2] World Health Organization, [who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cancer](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cancer)

[3] World Health Organization, [who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cancer](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cancer)



**Brain and spinal cord cancers.** About 3% of cases affect the nervous system formed in the brain and spinal cord.

**Sarcomas.** Sarcomas represent less than 1% of all cancers, sarcomas affect the connective tissues such as bones and soft tissues, such as cartilage or muscle.

## Effects of cancer and cancer treatments on a person

How cancer and cancer treatments affect a person will depend on:

- **The cancer:** the type of cancer, where it is in the body, how fast it is growing and whether it has spread to other parts of the body.

Cancers may cause many different symptoms that may impact on an employee at work, for example: abnormal bleeding; tiredness; unexplained weight loss; and pain. A cancer diagnosis can also often impact on people's mental health, with an increased risk of developing mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.

- **The treatment:** the type(s) of treatments used, how long treatment is given for, and the side effects of treatment. Note that access to treatment will vary from one locality to another.

Cancer treatments can cause a variety of side effects. These may include being more prone to infection, fatigue (extreme tiredness), sickness, mouth problems (for example, sore or dry mouth), digestive problems (for example, loss of appetite, diarrhoea), nerve damage (for example, tingling or numbness in fingers or toes) and hair loss.

Cancer can affect the life prognosis of a person, particularly when no treatment is available, when it cannot stop the cancer's progression or when an individual's body does not respond to treatment.

Every person's response to treatment is different. Employers should not compare or expect employees who have cancer to have the same symptoms or experiences.

- **Other health problems:** how cancer treatments affect a person will depend on whether the person has other significant health problems for example heart problems, chest problems, or diabetes.

For many people who have cancer there may be times during their illness and / or treatment when they feel tired and unwell. This may be due to a combination of the symptoms caused by their cancer and side effects from their treatment.

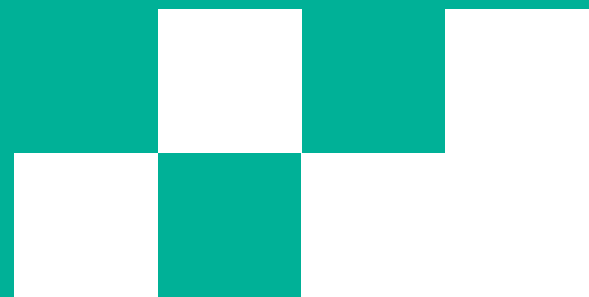
Usually any treatment-related side effects settle after treatment has ended although some may persist for some weeks or months afterwards. However, some side effects of cancer treatments, such as fatigue, are long lasting or permanent.

**Every person's  
response to treatment  
is different.**



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for sample purposes. Pages  
11 to 22 are available in the  
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