



Coping with cancer in the wake of floods and natural disasters

Information for patients, families, and the community

Australians impacted by cancer often face unique hardships associated with their diagnosis during and after natural disasters, including interrupted access to treatment and support, increased psychological stress and anxiety, practical difficulties, and financial challenges.

Having a **self-care plan** is essential in order to ensure individual wellbeing and community resilience.

Feelings of fatigue, confusion, and fogginess are common, as well as nervousness and disrupted sleep. Try as much as possible to eat well and get enough rest.

What to do if your treatment has been interrupted

If you have been evacuated from your home, you may not be able to access your doctor or local treatment centre/s. Your treatment plan may need to change, and could be suspended during emergency scenarios. Once the immediate emergency has passed, contact your treatment team or the authority in control of the recovery effort, and seek advice. If you run out of medication, seek medical advice as quickly as you can.

What to do if you have a medical emergency related to your cancer

Seek medical advice immediately if you experience signs of fever, chills, sinus pain, headache, shortness of breath, redness or swelling of any cuts, and any other new or worsening pain or symptoms. If you experience a medical event or notice new symptoms associated with your diagnosis, go to your nearest hospital, emergency treatment centre, or evacuation first-aid area. If you need to attend a hospital away from home, ensure you inform them of your cancer diagnosis and treatment status.

How to prevent infections

Avoid germs and contact with people suffering from infectious or viral illnesses such as bronchitis and influenza. Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water. If soap and water are unavailable, try locating alcohol-based hand sanitizer or use a clean cloth to wipe your hands. Try as much as possible to avoid scratches and cuts and be careful when engaging in activities that could lead to injury or infection. Wear gloves if you are assisting with clean-up efforts, and when handling food. If you do experience a cut, clean it with antiseptic immediately, and keep wounds clean and dry until they heal. Always try to have a first-aid kit on hand. Keep surfaces clean and avoid contact with potential contaminants and items such as bird cages and garbage bins.



Always be prepared

Talk to your doctor/s about what supplies you'll need on hand in a natural disaster, what the best method is for contacting them or accessing medical assistance, and what information you'll need to provide to other doctors if you receive treatment during an evacuation.

Ensure important documents are easy to access and carry if you are required to evacuate rapidly. These include medical records, contact details for your treatment team, prescription information, test results and reports, and insurance records.

Contacts

If you have questions about prostate cancer and what to do in the aftermath of a natural disaster, call our [Telenursing Service](#) during business hours on **1800 22 00 99** or email enquiries@pcfa.org.au.

Visit PCFA's Prostate Cancer Toolkit at www.prostate.org.au for more information about prostate cancer.

If you need further medical advice and you can't call our Telenursing team or access your treatment team, you can also contact **Healthdirect on 1800 022 222**.

In the event of an emergency, always dial 000.