

How to Talk to Your Employer When You're Diagnosed with Cancer

Being diagnosed with cancer naturally comes with questions – from understanding information about your diagnosis and treatment, to wondering how to share the news. And while every situation is different, the question often arises – what about work?

Some people prefer to keep their cancer journey private, while others decide to inform their employer and co-workers right away to begin establishing a plan. Either way, starting a private conversation with your HR director about the following topics will help you manage your cancer journey in the workplace.

- **Share your privacy wishes.** What and how much you share is a personal decision – and it may change over time – but it's important to establish your preferred boundaries.
- **Identify a point of contact.** Having a trusted point person who can help get you up to speed, relay necessary information to your team when needed, or even provide emotional support can be helpful in creating workable solutions.
- **Know your rights.** Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), eligible employees can take up to 12 weeks of leave in a 12-month period. Talk to your HR director about whether you're qualified for this leave, as well as any other rights you may have, such as short-term disability coverage or potential access to reasonable accommodations through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which provides eligible individuals with disabilities protection against discrimination in the workplace.
- **Discuss workplace accommodations.** Discuss the potential side effects of your treatment and what accommodations need to be made to support you throughout the workday, such as a closer parking spot, a modified workspace, or potentially shifting non-essential job duties to other employees.
- **Discuss changes to insurance.** Your insurance needs may change based on your treatment, and your HR director can help talk you through your options.
- **Anticipate schedule adjustments.** You may find yourself feeling tired or ill after treatment, so discuss any anticipated changes to your work schedule – such as reduced hours, working from home some days, or taking more frequent breaks – so you and your employer can prepare.
- **Ask about support services.** Many workplaces have employee assistance programs or support groups with those facing similar situations.

For additional resources related to navigating cancer in the workplace, visit [TexasOncology.com](https://www.texasoncology.com).