



HEALTH AWARENESS

Cancer And The Family

Tips To Help Children Cope



(NAPSA)—This year, cancer will affect millions of families. For families with young children, such devastating news can leave children feeling frightened or confused. People Living With Cancer, the patient Web site of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, www.PLWC.org, offers practical advice on how to talk with children and teens about cancer. Here are a few tips to consider when talking to elementary school children.

1. Help Children Feel Safe

Most children first experience sickness when they get a cold and are used to hearing adults say they “caught” someone else’s sore throat or flu. It is important to explain to children that cancer is not contagious. Assure them that they are safe.

2. Welcome Questions

Let children know that all questions are welcome, even if they cannot be answered right away. For children, the amount of information given to them is usually less important than making them feel comfortable with what is being said.

3. Alleviate Worry

The younger children are, the more they think the world revolves around them, and the

more likely they are to feel responsible for a parent or sibling’s illness. It is important to assure them by saying that nothing they or anyone else did caused the cancer.

4. Help Children Understand Treatment

Children often fear the unknown. Explain the treatment process in a way that is appropriate for their age. Don’t forget that children may confuse the side effects of treatment with symptoms or signs of the cancer itself. Chemotherapy may be interpreted as being bad because it makes a parent ill. Separating the side effects of treatment from the disease itself may also provide some comfort.

5. Seek Support

No family should have to face cancer alone. Fortunately, there are many emotional support resources available. Specially trained counselors can help parents discuss cancer with their children. A listing of support organizations that can provide information and assistance can also be found on www.PLWC.org. Be sure to ask your doctor or nurse to tell you about specific resources available for children at your medical center.