

## Making choices

### Join the decision-makers

Here's the good news: you have a team of people, all working to get you through cancer. Your parents, your consultant, your nurses, your CLIC Sargent Youth Worker or Social Worker, your friends, other family members – and you.

And the bad news? That's an awful lot of people to be involved in deciding what's best for you.

That's why it's important to decide for yourself what **you** want, and to make sure you have a voice in discussions about your health and treatment.

Of course, some decisions have to be made by your consultant or nurse. They're the experts on your medical health.

But there are also plenty of choices you can make for yourself. So don't let other people take over if you don't want them to. Of course, there may be times when you don't want to be involved in making decisions – that's alright too.

Sometimes your doctors, parents or teachers will just make assumptions: that you don't **mind** when you have your treatment, that you don't **want** to go on that school trip. If they're wrong, it's important to let them know. Give them a quick reminder that you've got a mind of your own.

### Taking control

Making your own decisions and being assertive can help to make you feel that you're in control; that the cancer hasn't taken over your life completely.

You can still have fun, still go out with your friends, and still be 'you'.

### Start as you mean to go on

It's a good idea to begin asking questions and making your own choices as early as possible, so your medical team and family get used to including you in discussions and decision-making.

But if you're too tired, ill or unsure about speaking up at the beginning of your treatment, don't worry. It's never too late to start.

### Talk to your doctor

To make the right decisions, you need all the facts – how else can you be involved in making choices?

Your consultant is obviously the best person to tell you what's what and help you investigate the possible medicines and treatments for your kind of cancer. Why not write all your questions down and give them the list?

If you don't know where to start, take a look at the 'Questions to ask your consultant' factsheet for some ideas.

Once you've got your consultant's answers, ask them to keep you up to date with what's happening and how your treatment is progressing, so you can make decisions based on the most up-to-date information.

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### You'll never know unless you ask

Some parts of your treatment simply have to happen at a specific time or in a definite order. But there are plenty of other things that could be negotiable.

- If you're not getting on well with a treatment, ask if there are alternatives; someone may just have assumed you'd prefer the one you're on.
- If you feel you're missing out on something, like a friend's party or a crucial football match, ask whether it's possible to delay the next stage of your treatment – it may not be a problem at all.

The thing is, you'll never know what's negotiable, or what the alternatives are, unless you ask.

Sometimes your consultant or nurse will tell you that what you're asking for isn't safe, or your parents simply won't be able to make alternative arrangements to allow for your change of plan. But you've nothing to lose by asking. Perhaps you can agree some kind of half-way point that would suit everybody.

If you want to make a really big change, you might want to talk to your nurses first, to see what they think. If it's truly not possible, they can tell you, and if your plan is a possibility, they may be able to put your idea to the consultant for you, or help you talk to your parents.

Everybody wants you to get well, and you'll make more progress if you're happy. So if you find yourself wondering "Should I say something?" remember that you always have a right to ask.