



# National Cancer Information Center

The American Cancer Society's National Cancer Information Center (NCIC) is a nationwide cancer help line open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The NCIC has trained Cancer Information Specialists (CIS). The CIS answer calls and e-mails from people with cancer, their family members and friends, and others who have questions about cancer. Live online chat is also available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Central Time.

## NCIC services

### Cancer information

The American Cancer Society knows that people need accurate, easy-to-understand information, and has developed an extensive database of up-to-date cancer information. This database covers many topics, and includes information on:

- Cancer prevention recommendations
- Guidelines for detecting cancer early
- Different cancer types and subtypes
- Cancer treatment options and their side effects
- Day-to-day coping with cancer, from personal and family issues to working and insurance
- How to manage symptoms and side effects
- How to talk with members of the cancer care team
- What to expect as a caregiver for someone with cancer
- How friends and family can help a person with cancer

Each document in the database has been written and reviewed by a team of medical experts and further reviewed by professional editorial staff to simplify any medical words and make it as easy to read as possible. This information helps people better understand the disease and make informed decisions about cancer care.

## **Other organizations/resources**

The American Cancer Society also keeps lists of cancer resources, such as support groups, patient service programs, and other community-based social services. With this information, Cancer Information Specialists can connect callers and writers with services where they live or in other US cities – a big help for those who are caring for loved ones long distance. The American Cancer Society is the only national organization that can provide both comprehensive cancer information and local resources.

## **Cancer Information Specialists**

All NCIC Cancer Information Specialists (CIS) go through many weeks of training to manage calls, understand call standards, and share appropriate, relevant information with callers. The CIS are monitored monthly and evaluated against a number of quality standards, including things like communication skills, call management techniques, and information.

To ensure all callers get accurate cancer-related information, CIS who can help Spanish-speaking callers are on staff, too, and a translation service is used for those who speak other languages.

## **Oncology Nurse Information Specialists**

People who contact the American Cancer Society with more specific medical and cancer-related questions may be referred to Oncology Nurse Information Specialists. This team of registered nurses provides one-on-one clinical information, such as information about treatments, side effects of treatments, testing, and disease-related questions. They also serve as a medical resource for Cancer Information Specialists.

## **Clinical Trials Matching Service**

Another available resource is the Clinical Trials Matching Service, which helps patients, family members, and health care providers find clinical trials that are most suited to a patient's medical and personal needs. Clinical Trials Specialists answer questions about taking part in clinical trials and help people find treatment options available in current research studies.

## **Health Insurance Assistance Service**

The American Cancer Society also provides a service to help cancer patients struggling with health insurance-related problems. The Health Insurance Assistance Service (HIAS) helps cancer patients identify health insurance options for which they might be eligible and gives them a chance to share their insurance and financial stories. The HIAS also helps educate people on insurance issues related to recent health care law changes. This team collects data and monitors trends along with the ACS Cancer Action Network to advocate for national policy change.

## **Tobacco cessation**

A call to the NCIC can put people in touch with the Society's tobacco cessation resource, too. This program is an excellent option for tobacco users who are interested in quitting and staying quit. The tobacco cessation service offers tobacco users options that can help increase their chances of quitting for good, including telephone counseling, self-help materials, and referrals to local support programs.

## **Fundraisers/donations**

Those who contact the NCIC can learn about and participate in American Cancer Society events, such as Relay For Life and Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, as well as cancer education programs.

Many people who contact the American Cancer Society want to learn about ways to financially support the Society's work. To assist with these requests, Donation Specialists are available to explain the many ways callers can donate to the Society and can help process their contributions, right over the phone. Acknowledgment cards can be sent to family members and other loved ones.

## **Frequently asked questions about the NCIC**

### **Where is the National Cancer Information Center?**

It's based in Austin, Texas.

## **Other organizations, such as the National Cancer Institute and local hospitals, already have cancer lines that provide general information and local resources. How is the American Cancer Society's help line unique?**

The American Cancer Society's service is also the *only* nationwide cancer information service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Society's service complements other services by providing high quality, current, reliable cancer information and access to local cancer resources such as support groups, patient services, and local social services. These resources are needed to help patients and their families make informed choices and cope with the physical, psychological, and emotional challenges of a cancer diagnosis.

## **Will callers to the 800-number ever be asked for money, publication subscriptions, or to give to any other American Cancer Society programs?**

The only time a solicitation is done is if the person has been a donor in the past.

## **How many calls/emails/chats does the NCIC handle?**

The NCIC receives about 825,000 contacts a year.

## **Can the NCIC provide local information for everyone in the US?**

Yes. The Cancer Information Specialists provide general cancer information, as well as local community resources for each caller based on the zip code they share. American Cancer Society offices around the country provide detailed information about each resource and the accuracy of each record is regularly verified.

## **How quickly can callers get information?**

A lot of questions are answered right away with information shared over the phone. Mailed materials are processed the next business day. Much of the information can also be e-mailed.

## **If calls to the 800-number are connected to the NCIC, how do callers reach their local American Cancer Society offices?**

Our Specialists can connect callers with their local chapters.

## **What's the most popular request for information?**

Most callers ask for information on local programs and services; they often ask about certain types of cancer, the American Cancer Society in general, and local events, too. Our Specialists can also help with online event fundraising questions. Most of the remaining callers want to know how they can make a donation.

## **Will the Cancer Information Specialists refer callers to specific doctors?**

No. As an unbiased source of cancer information, the American Cancer Society does not make physician referrals. We do give information about finding local cancer care centers.

## **What's the education level of Cancer Information Specialists? How much training do they get?**

Our Cancer Information Specialists (CIS) are required to have a college degree or equivalent experience. Many of them have an education or professional background in social work or psychology. All of our CIS possess a warm, caring spirit and the sincere desire to help people.

CIS must complete more than 5 weeks of training to become familiar with

American Cancer Society standards, the organization's history and structure, the information databases, and how to handle sensitive calls. CIS also receive regular continuing training to further increase their knowledge and skills and keep them current on the ever-changing world of cancer care.

## **Many of the Cancer Information Specialists have backgrounds in social work and psychology. Does this mean that the callers can receive on-line therapy?**

No. Specialists do not provide formal therapy or counseling; still, they are trained to work with emotionally distraught callers. Specialists may suggest support groups or other resources where the callers can get the help they need.

## **How do you ensure that the services and support groups you recommend are reputable?**

With more than 900 local American Cancer Society offices throughout the country, the American Cancer Society has been a community staple for more than 100 years. Through our work with health care communities around the country, we have learned which organizations are reputable, reliable, and most capable of meeting the needs of people with cancer and their families.

## **Does the NCIC have specialists to meet the needs of non-English speaking callers?**

Yes. The American Cancer Society's goal is to provide reliable, up-to-date cancer information to all people. Currently, we have Spanish-speaking Cancer Information Specialists. For languages other than Spanish, we rely on the Optimal Phone Interpreters (OPI) Telephone Interpretation Services. This service provides interpreters for more than 200 languages.

## **Can the NCIC handle calls from the hearing and/or speech impaired?**

The hearing and/or speech impaired can reach the American Cancer Society on our TTY line at 1-866-228-4327. People who do not have personal access

to a TTY can call their state TDD agency (look online at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/trsphonebk.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/trsphonebk.html) to find your state's number) to relay their call through the American Cancer Society's 800-number.

The American Cancer Society is available anytime, day or night, to help you with cancer information and support. Call us at 1-800-227-2345, or visit us online at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

**2016 Copyright American Cancer Society**

For additional assistance please contact your American Cancer Society  
1-800-227-2345 or [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)