

How do I talk to my friends **ABOUT MY CONDITION**



Knowing how to talk to friends about your condition or diagnosis can sometimes feel a bit daunting. It doesn't matter if you have always had your condition or have just recently been diagnosed; you might worry about how to start a conversation or be concerned about how they will react.



Having friends around you is important. They can be a source of help and support in managing your condition, diagnosis or treatment.

Thinking about telling your friends is important. Friends can be a source of support and help you to feel normal if you have a time that you have to stay in hospital or are feeling ill at home.

There are a few things that it can help to consider when you are thinking about talking to friends about your condition. Sometimes your friends might know that something is happening but not know how to say anything to you. If your

- Whether to talk to people separately or in a group
- Will it be easier to talk in a quiet place or while doing something, like going for a walk
- How much detail you want to give
- What you want to say – it can be helpful to practice finding some words while you are on your own!

condition or any appointments affect your involvement in activities or at school, talking about why you are away may help others understand.

Sometimes it can feel hard to talk about how you are feeling and when you are planning talking to friends, it can be helpful to think about:

- How you feel about friends telling others what you have told them – it can be important to talk about this
- Whether you are happy for them to ask you questions
- Whether there is anything they can do to help



Having the conversation can sometimes feel a bit daunting, but when it happens, it is often more straightforward than you expect. Relationships can often grow stronger as your friends have some understanding of what's going on and can help you manage your condition or support you.

There might be some occasions that a friend may not react in the way that you expect them to. They might go quiet or your relationship might feel a bit different for a while. This might feel difficult but it can help to

think about why. When you were diagnosed or started to understand your condition, you might have been a bit shocked or had lots of questions. Your friends might be going through the same. They might be asking themselves questions such as:



- How can I help?
- What if I say the wrong thing?
- Should I talk about it?
- Should I talk about other things or will that make it look like I don't care?

It is important to think about these things but lots of the time, telling friends can feel like a bigger issue than it is.

Who you choose to talk to and when and how you do this should always be your decision.

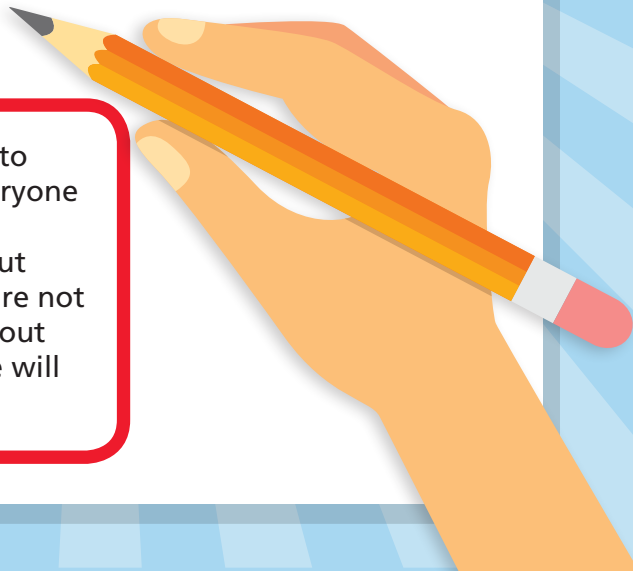


Top tips and strategies

If talking is too difficult, there are other ways that you might want to think about communicating what is happening or how you feel. You could:

- 1 Talk on the phone if face-to-face feels difficult
- 2 Send a text, instant message, email or letter
- 3 Ask a parent/carer or someone else who knows to talk to your friend(s)
- 4 It can help to write down what is happening and how you are feeling even if you don't feel ready to share it with anyone

It sometimes helps to remember that everyone is different and we all have things about ourselves that we are not 100% confident about or sure how people will react to.



WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?

The clinical nurse specialist team and the play specialists are there to talk to. They might be able to talk through some ideas of how you would like to tell your friend about your condition or diagnosis.



These toolkits have been written by NHS clinical psychologists and neuropsychologists working for University Hospitals Bristol. They have been co-designed with service users and healthcare staff. These toolkits are only intended to provide general advice and information. Please discuss your individual needs with your doctor or specialist nurse. If you would like more information about psychology services please go to:

<http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/support-for-patients/psychological-health-services/>

We would like to thank patients and other healthcare staff for their contributions to this toolkit.

For access to other patient toolkits please go to the following address:

<http://www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/support-for-patients/psychological-health-services/resources/>

For this leaflet in large print, audio or PDF format, please email patientleaflets@uhbristol.nhs.uk

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| Published: 14/09/18 | Expires: 30/09/21 | WACD/CHS/PHS/TLKTCH/TALK/SEP18 |

