

What Is Fear of Recurrence?

Due to the possibility of relapse, fear of recurrence is a common challenge after cancer treatment. It includes upsetting thoughts and feelings about the threat of cancer coming back.



Things to know about fear of recurrence:



It is **not** irrational to be afraid of cancer relapse



Symptom severity can range from mild to debilitating



Anxiety may rise before scans or alongside physical symptoms

Each hospital has different resources to assess and treat mental health symptoms such as fear of recurrence.

You can ask your treatment team for guidance on managing it.

Coping With Fear of Recurrence

There are some common thought patterns or “thinking errors” that can make it harder to manage fear of recurrence.

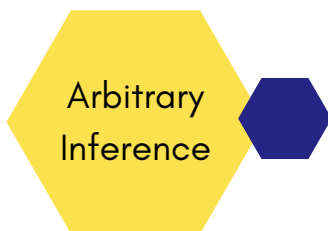
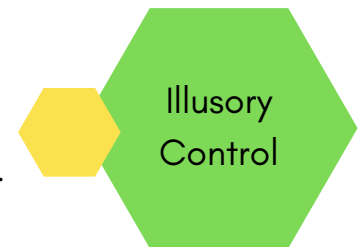


Drawing conclusions based on how good or bad you feel, rather than the evidence you have.

“I feel more anxious about this appointment than I ever have about a doctor’s visit. That must mean I’m going to get bad news.”

Believing that your thoughts and actions will determine an outcome that is actually out of your control.

“I spend so much time worrying instead of making the most of my life. If I don’t take better care of myself, the cancer will come back.”



Using a small amount of information to hold up a large assumption.

“I always go to the same room in clinic, but today it’s a different room. That must mean something is wrong this time.”

The first step to feeling better is noticing unhelpful thought patterns. A therapist or other mental health professional can help if these thoughts are persistent or overwhelming.