

Talking about cancer with your kids is hard. **We get it.**

Bright Reads books are one way to start this difficult conversation.

This guide is intended to be used by parents and guardians, grandparents and loved ones, or any loving member of your community. You'll notice the questions are posed from the perspective of a parent with cancer—please change the language to fit your needs.

We've listed suggested ages for the discussion questions and activity ideas, but you know your child the best. These questions may not work for every child depending on language development, understanding of a parent's cancer, and all of the things that make our kids unique.

Here are some helpful questions and sentence starters to use with your child when you are reading together, when a moment of connection opens up, or anytime you need them.

- What did you think of this story? How did it make you feel?
- What is similar (or different) between this story and our family's story?
- What did you learn from this story?



It is helpful to keep sentences short and to the point when telling young children about your cancer diagnosis. Here are some sentences to consider and edit to your specific situation:

I have cancer.

Cancer is a (sickness, illness or disease depending on your family's preference).

You can't catch it. I didn't catch it or get it from you or anyone else.

I am going to the doctor to get better.

I am getting a medicine called chemotherapy / radiation.

The medicine may make me feel sick and tired.

You can hug and snuggle me all you want and you will never catch cancer.

Nothing you did or said caused me to get cancer.

You can always ask me questions about cancer or how I feel.

Please keep in mind that some children will not want to talk about their feelings. Some children will have a million questions. Other children might have huge emotions and big behaviors. It is ALL o.k. Let your children know that you love them no matter what and that they can come to you when they are ready (and over-and-over again).

A big thank-you to the following professionals who contributed to and reviewed these guides:

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Chemotherapy 101 for Kids by Chelsey Gomez



Discussion Questions:

Suggested age: Preschool–School Age

Do you know what kind of chemotherapy/medicine I get (pill/iv)? *(Parents—if you have a picc line or port, show your kids as you read about it in the book. They may want to hear what it feels like when the medicine goes into your body, what the procedure was like to get the device, and how to be careful around it on your body.)*

What can you do to help me rest while I recover from chemo treatment?

How can everyone in the family help to keep germs away from me while I am in chemo treatment?

The book says it is normal (and good!) to be curious! What questions do you still have about cancer?

Activity Ideas:

Suggested Age: Preschool–School Age

Decorate an old medication bottle as a superhero! Inside, kids can put slips of paper with drawings (or words) of things that can help you feel better (ex: happy pictures, silly sayings, jokes, things you love about them, coupons for help around the house, etc.)

Suggested Age: School Age

Create a calendar with dates of chemo treatments. Engage your child in coloring/drawing on the calendar. Add notes on days about when other caregivers will be visiting, days you know you will feel tired/sick, and your last day of chemo. Plan a celebration for your last day!

Invite your kids to create cards for the nurses and medical team who are taking care of you during chemo.