

The purpose of this guide is to help you find information and support on cancer online communities. This guide provides links and references to reliable and current information sources for patients, families, and caregivers.

Many of these materials are available to purchase through online resources, or to borrow at your public library.

What are Online Communities?

- Online communities are electronic discussion groups that focus on particular topics. People subscribing to an online community may read all the messages that are sent by other members, and any messages that they send to the group are read by all other subscribers.
- There are hundreds of online communities discussing issues relating to cancer. Most of them are devoted to specific cancer types, but others revolve around issues, such as survivorship, coping, caregiving, etc.

How to locate Online Communities

- **American Cancer Society**
<http://cancer.org/treatment/supportprogramsservices/onlinecommunities>
Provides information on communities hosted by the American Cancer Society.
- **CancerCare**
http://cancercare.org/support_groups
Provides links to their online support groups.

- **Cancer Support Community**

<http://cancersupportcommunity.org/MainMenu/Cancer-Support/Online-Support-Groups.html>

Provides information about their online support community.

- **Cancer.Net**

<https://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/finding-support-and-information/online-communities-support>

Provides information about online communities and includes links of where to find groups on the web.

Why Join an Online Community?

- Online communities provide an easy and direct way to connect with other people coping with similar issues and circumstances. They are a good source in which to learn coping strategies with both the physical and psychological aspects of cancer.
- Physical support groups meet at specific times in specific locations. In contrast, electronic discussion groups operate around-the-clock and are accessible to anyone with a computer and an internet connection, with a much larger potential audience.

Issues to consider before subscribing to an Online Community

- Keep in mind that the information exchanged in online communities is anecdotal, and not scientifically proven. Please validate the accuracy of any information with your physician before making any decisions on medical treatment.

- Do not compare yourself or a loved one to other patients discussed on the list. Every cancer patient has a unique situation and any number of variables affecting their circumstances.
- Just like support groups, email discussion groups are not for everyone. Some messages may be discouraging or upsetting.

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