



WOODLANDS HOSPICE

**Trying to support children who are affected by a serious illness can cause us to feel anxious about saying or doing the wrong thing, about making things worse, or causing lasting emotional damage. Our fears may mean that children do not get the help they need.**

It can seem easier not to have to think about these things, but they do have a way of wriggling into our minds when we are low or feeling unwell.

Children tell us that talking about, and acknowledging, the uncertainties and concerns that they experience when someone in their family is unwell helps them to feel more involved and able to make choices that are right for them.

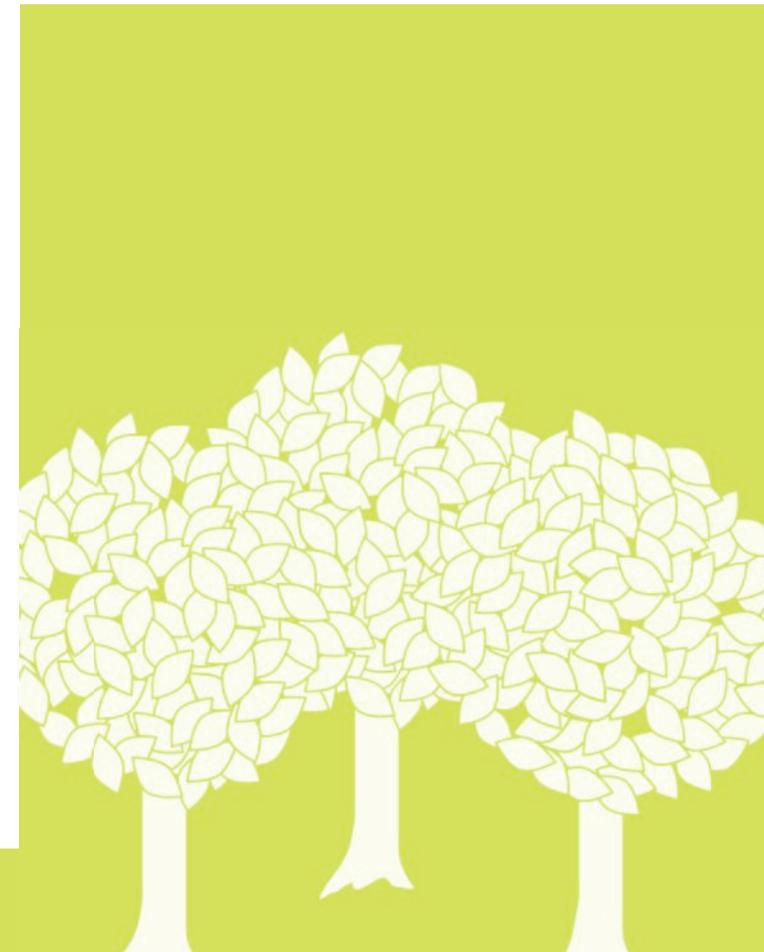
Please contact the Family Support Worker, your Key Worker, the Hospice at Home Coordinator or the Nurse in Charge of the Inpatient Unit if you would find it helpful to talk about any concerns you have for any children or young people you know.

If you would like to help contribute towards the support we give every day at Woodlands Hospice, there are many ways you can help. Find out more on our website or call the Fundraising team on 0151 529 2631



Woodlands Hospice Charitable Trust,  
AUH Campus, Longmoor Lane, Liverpool L9 7LA  
Tel: 0151 529 2299  
[www.woodlandshospice.org](http://www.woodlandshospice.org) Charity No. 1048934

## Talking to children about serious illness



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**As adults we can assume we know how children are feeling. But children's experiences of serious illness in the family may differ from ours as adults.**

It's helpful to ask children how they are feeling and accept it.

Children often imagine that things are far worse than they really are. Be honest with your children as early as possible. Try not to leave them to pick up on tense atmospheres.

Give children information in terms that they can understand. Use language that is simple and clear, and give the same information more than once.

Give new information regularly so that your children can trust that they will be kept up to date.

Ask questions and make sure that your children have taken in correctly what you and other people tell them.

Expect some disruptive behaviour.

Let your children know that they are not to blame for anything that has happened.

Serious illness can sometimes disrupt family life. A daily routine is important. Let your children know it is OK to laugh and have fun.

Children need opportunities to ask questions, to receive information and reassurance, and to express and share feelings in safety.

Don't assume it's always best to keep children away from the person who is sick, even if he or she is very ill.

There is more than one way to support your children. Choose the things you feel most comfortable with and try to accept that you will get some things wrong. You are not super-human, so be gentle on yourself.