

People at the Centre Update 3

People living with cancer describe the mental and physical impact of COVID-19

In a survey of adults with a previous cancer diagnosis, Macmillan Cancer Support and YouGov have unearthed the devastating impact COVID-19 is having on the physical and mental health of people living with cancer:

- 15% of people living with cancer in Scotland have barely left the house because they are scared to do so.
- 20% of those who have not left the house at all since the start of lockdown say they won't feel safe enough to do so until a vaccine or effective treatment is widely available, irrespective of changes to recent government shielding guidance.
- 30% feel stressed, anxious or depressed.
- 9% have seen their mental health worsen.
- 9% have experienced panic or anxiety attacks or even suicidal thoughts because of the virus.
- And 14% have experienced a decline in their physical health during lockdown, including sleep problems (10%), fatigue or extreme tiredness (9%), or pain (5%).

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Qualitative research has also uncovered the individual impact COVID-19 is having on people living with cancer in Scotland:

“I’ve never had anxiety but being in lockdown has made me so nervous and anxious to leave my flat, even for fresh air.”

“I’ve had a couple of panic attacks and I’ve felt so trapped.”

“I’ve found the lockdown very, very hard. I feel like I’m in the twilight zone. Like I’m not really part of the world.”

“(A second wave of the virus could mean that) all of us who are shielding will be trapped at home most of the year.”

Macmillan Cancer Support’s Head of Services in Scotland Janice Preston commented on these findings:

“Right now, on top of the usual worries, many patients are also dealing with uncertainty around treatment, shielding restrictions and isolation from loved ones, as well as concerns about their risk of contracting the virus.

“The government must urgently deliver on its plan to get the cancer care system back on track, including an explicit recognition of the importance of ensuring people are still offered emotional and practical help.”

[More information on the findings of this survey is available here.](#)