

## Parenting through Cancer

Among the many difficult questions a parent or grandparent must face when diagnosed with cancer is “what do I tell the children?” Parents are often fearful that their children will worry; some parents choose not to tell their children at all. Children can sense when something is wrong, even at a very young age. If they are not told the truth, they might start to imagine that things are far worse than they are, or even that they are the cause of the problem. Talking to a child about a parent or grandparent’s cancer and how it will affect the family isn’t easy but it is necessary. Consider these tips when talking with children.

- **Prepare** - Have an idea of what you need to say. Have a spouse, friend or relative with you for support if it makes it easier.
- **Set the tone** - How you say it is as important as what you say. Use a calm and reassuring voice. It’s alright to become sad because it lets the child know you are also trying to cope. It’s okay if they get upset or walk away. Reassure them that this can be scary to hear, and explain how you can discuss it more at a later time.
- **Be age appropriate** - Use words that children will understand. When talking for the 1st time about the diagnosis, consider talking to younger children separately so you will be able to explain it at a level they will understand. Older children often want more details and have questions that might scare the younger children who are not able to understand.

- **Share information about the treatment plan**
  - Explain how the treatment may or may not change their routine. Explain that there might be treatment related side effects and prepare them for those. Reassure them they will be cared for no matter what.
- **Encourage children to express their feelings**
  - They may choose to talk to you, teachers at school, clergy, family members or close friends of the family. Keeping the communication lines open will be helpful for the children as they adapt to the change.

It can also help to explain the situation to your children’s teachers so they can be watching for changes in behavior and be able to assist. Learning that someone in the family has cancer is an emotional time for children. Each child will deal with the news in a different way. Don’t be afraid to ask for help if you are unsure how to respond to behavioral changes.

### Resources:

**American Cancer Society:** [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org), 1-800-227-2345

**CancerCare:** [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org), 1-800-813-4673

**KidsConnected:** [www.kidsconnected.org](http://www.kidsconnected.org), 1-800-899-2866

The organizations listed are just a sample of what is available. Please contact your local patient navigator for additional support.



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**Mayo Clinic in Rochester:** Jeri Lensing and Angela Young, 507-266-9288.

**Mayo Clinic in Arizona:** Jill Lovill, 480-301-5990.

For more information on all ACS programs and services or to connect with a patient navigator in your area, call 800-227-2345 or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).



Jeri Lensing



Angela Young



Jill Lovill

# Calendar of Events

## May

### *Stay Out of the Sun Run*

Friday May 20, 2011

6:30 PM

10K Run-5K Run/walk

Holy Spirit Catholic Church

5455 50th Ave NW, Rochester MN

Proceeds go to Melanoma Research

& Education- Mayo Clinic Cancer

Center. For additional informa-

tion about registration and entry

fees please visit [www.sosrun.org](http://www.sosrun.org).

org- or call 507-282-4576 or e-mail

[susan@sosrun.org](mailto:susan@sosrun.org); [tim@sosrun.org](mailto:tim@sosrun.org)

### *Mayo Clinic Cancer Center*

#### *Melanoma Patient Education*

#### *Symposium*

Saturday, May 21, 2011

8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Phillips Hall, Siebens Building,

Mayo Clinic

This education event, for patients, families and the public, will highlight risk factors, screening, diag-

nosis, treatment and research for malignant melanoma. Registration deadline May 10, 2011.

Registration Fee (includes breakfast, lunch and conference materials): \$15/person or \$25/couple, checks only.

For registration information, contact the registrar at 507-284-2241 or [cancerprog@mayo.edu](mailto:cancerprog@mayo.edu)

## June

### *National Cancer Survivors Day*

Sunday, June 5, 2011

11 a.m.-2 p.m.

Mayo Civic Center- Rochester, MN

Cancer survivors, their families and friends are invited to a celebration of life during the upcoming 24th annual National Cancer Survivors Day with a theme of "Wild Wild West". The event is Sponsored by Mayo Clinic Cancer Center and the American Cancer Society, admission is free for cancer survivors and two guests. Additional guests are welcome to attend for a

nominal fee of \$5 per person.

Reservations are required by May 30, 2011. To register, call (507) 284-2241 or E-mail [cancerprog@mayo.edu](mailto:cancerprog@mayo.edu).

## July

### *Relay for Life- Olmsted County*

July 15-16, 2011

University Center Rochester

851 30th Ave SE

Rochester, MN

[ross.messick@cancer.org](mailto:ross.messick@cancer.org)

The American Cancer Society Relay For Life is a life-changing event that gives everyone in communities across the globe a chance to celebrate the lives of people who have battled cancer, remember loved ones lost, and fight back against the disease. During the event, teams have a participant on the track at all times to represent that cancer never sleeps. For more information about Relay for Life or to find your local event visit <http://www.relayforlife.org> or call 1-800-227-2345.

Mayo Clinic is dedicated to providing information and resources to support patients during their cancer journey. Knowledge empowers patients to become active partners in their health care.

## Services

Mayo Clinic staff and volunteers are available to help patients, caregivers, and the public:

- Learn about cancer prevention and detection
- Find out more about a cancer diagnosis
- Explore treatment options
- Understand clinical research
- Connect to educational sessions and support groups
- Address survivorship issues
- Locate additional support resources, such as financial assistance, lodging, transportation, wigs, and prosthetics



The Stephen and Barbara Slaggie Family Cancer Education Center is open to cancer patients, family and friends.

**Location: Gonda Building, Street Level**

**Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday**

**Phone: 507-266-9288**

MAYO CLINIC | 200 First Street SW | Rochester, MN 55905 | [mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org)

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