



**YOUR FIRST STEPS
BEYOND CANCER FEAR!**

FROM DIAGNOSIS TO EMPOWERMENT

**A compassionate guide to understanding
your diagnosis, reclaiming control, and
beginning your healing journey.**

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Welcome! You are not alone ❤️

“When you first hear the words ‘You have cancer,’ time stops. You feel the air leave your body. Your thoughts race. Fear takes over.”

I know that feeling — because I’ve been there too.

In December 2017, my world turned upside down with a breast cancer diagnosis. I was fit, active, and running a business with my husband. Overnight, everything changed.

What followed was a journey of shock, research, transformation, and healing. I learned that fear only has power when we feel powerless — and that knowledge, community, and self-belief can change everything.

This guide is here to help you take back that power.

Whether you’ve just been diagnosed, or someone you love is walking this path — this book will help you find clarity in the chaos, and hope in the unknown.

You are not alone.
You are stronger than you think.
And this is where your healing begins.

Justine
xx

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NOTES

A space for you to jot down reflections, reminders, and insights as you go.



How to use this guide

This is more than a booklet — it's a companion for the weeks ahead.

Inside, you'll find:



A checklist of what to do first after diagnosis.



Simple explanations of your pathology and test results



A clear guide to understanding **stages and grades** of cancer



Questions to ask your doctors and treatment team



An introduction to the **Six Pillars of Healing** that transformed my recovery



Links to **videos** and **free tools** to help you stay calm, organized, and in control

By the end, you'll have the foundation to move from **fear** » **clarity** » **empowerment.**

First things First

You've just received life-changing news.

It's okay to pause.

It's okay to cry.

It's okay to not have all the answers.

...ance is why an... and us. Th...
...sion can provide sota... art in creating enviro...
...stress, and discover in... hgh the vibrant colors of...
...e mental health and foster self-awareness, intricate details of a handcrafted piece of furniture, or the...
...onnection between creativity and well-be- well-composed song, art enriches our daily lives.
...of beauty and aesthetics, an exploration of The value of art is immeasurable, yet it often struggles to fin...
...While beauty is subjective and culturally and support. Many artists face financial instability, and...
...entral element of artistic creation. The the arts is frequently vulnerable to budget cuts. Despite th...
...the resilience of the artis...

Before diving into treatments, opinions, and Google searches, start here — with yourself.
Take a deep breath and remember: ***you are in control of the next step.***

YOUR IMMEDIATE ACTION

Checklist



Understand your diagnosis

- Identify your type of cancer
- Understand where it started (primary site)
- Identify whether it has spread (metastasized)
- Know your stage and grade

Get organised

- Request copies of all medical documents, scans, and pathology reports
- Create a cancer folder (digital or printed)
- Write down questions before each appointment

Build Your Support Network

- Choose one or two trusted people to attend appointments with you
- Join a support group (we have a list of groups further on in this guide)
- Let others help with things such as meals, transport, or childcare

Care for Your Mind

- Try gentle breathing, prayer, or meditation
- Journal your thoughts — it helps process the fear
- Avoid late-night Googling; focus on trusted sources



*Remember: One small step
each day is progress*

UNDERSTANDING YOUR DIAGNOSIS

Knowledge reduces fear.

*When you understand your
diagnosis, you become your own
advocate.*

Reading a pathology report



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READING A PATHOLOGY REPORT

A pathology report is a medical document used to diagnose disease by evaluating cells, tissues, and organs. The report gives a diagnosis based on the examination of a sample of tissue taken from the patient's tumor. The report includes details about the specimen, a gross description, a microscopic description, and a final diagnosis.

The report provides the definitive cancer diagnosis, is used for staging, and helps plan treatment.

Different pathologists may use different words to describe the same findings, but most pathology reports include the following sections:

Patient, doctor, and specimen: This section lists the patient's name, birth date, and other personal information, an individual number assigned to the patient to help identify samples, the pathologist's and oncologist's contact information, as well as the

laboratory where the sample was tested, and details about the specimen, including the type of biopsy or surgery and the type of tissue. *Gross, or obvious, description:* This section describes the tissue sample or tumour as seen with the naked eye. This includes the general colour, weight, size, and consistency.

Microscopic description: This is the most technical section of the report. It describes what the cancer cells look like when viewed under a microscope.

Diagnosis section: This section provides the final pathology diagnosis that is established after thorough examination of the specimen. Some diagnoses are very short, while others may include additional data such as images, molecular characteristics of a tumor, or provide additional information.

Understanding your blood test



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UNDERSTANDING YOUR BLOOD TESTS

A full blood count (FBC) is a common medical test that your doctor may recommend to monitor your health. In cancer care, this blood test can be used to help diagnose a cancer or monitor how cancer or its treatment is affecting your body. For example, people undergoing chemotherapy often receive regular FBCs.

In cancer care, a FBC is used to:

- Help diagnose some blood cancers, such as leukemia and lymphoma
- Find out if cancer has spread to bone marrow
- See how your body is being affected by cancer treatment
- Diagnose and monitor non-cancerous conditions during cancer treatment

A FBC is one of many ways that your doctor can monitor your health. Based on the results, your doctor may alter your treatment or prescribe new medications. Click [**HERE**](#) to download your own bloodwork spreadsheet.



CANCER STAGES

The stage of a cancer is how large it is and how far it has spread by the results of scans, biopsies and other tests in a process known as staging.

It allows doctors to determine the best treatment options.

There are different staging systems for different cancers. The most common ones are the TNM and numbered staging systems.

TNM system

The TNM system measures three categories:

T (tumour) – how large the tumour (cancer) is

N (lymph node) – whether it has spread into any of the surrounding nodes

M (metastasis) – whether it has spread to other parts of the body and formed secondary cancers.

Numbered staging system

The numbered system uses the TNM information to give a stage number to the cancer:

Stage 0 – abnormal cells are present but there is no spread. It is also known as carcinoma-in-situ and may develop into cancer in the future.

Stage 1 – the cancer is small and has only spread a little into nearby tissues. It has not spread to any lymph nodes or other body areas.

Stage 2 and 3 – the cancer is larger or has spread into nearby tissues or lymph nodes.

Stage 4 – the cancer has spread to other areas of the body. This is also called metastatic cancer or advanced cancer.

Blood cancers have their own staging systems.

CANCER GRADES

The grade of a cancer is based on how abnormal the cells look under a microscope. Cancers with very abnormal cells are likely to grow and spread faster.

Grade 1 (low grade) – the cells look similar to normal cells and are growing and dividing slowly.

Grade 2 (intermediate grade) – the cells don't look like normal cells and are growing and dividing faster than normal cells.

Grade 3 (high grade) – the cells look very abnormal and are growing and dividing quickly.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MEDICAL TEAM

“The more you understand, the more confident you’ll feel.”

The following are lists of common questions to take with you to your appointments.

It’s also a good idea to write notes as you go. Please use the notes section at the back of this guide.

And taking a support person with you to your appointments is invaluable. At this stage of your journey you are more than likely still in a place of overwhelm and taking in information can be challenging. A support person can take this stress away, ensuring you don’t miss any crucial information.

QUESTIONS REGARDING DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

QUESTIONS AFTER DIAGNOSIS

it is important to take charge and understand your diagnosis. This way, it can help you make decisions about the treatment and care you want.

- 1 What kind of cancer do I have?
- 2 Has it spread?
- 3 Do I need more tests?
- 4 How bad is the cancer, and what does that mean for me?
- 5 Where do I get more information?
- 6 What happens next?
- 7 Who do I contact if I have further questions?

NOTE:

Everyone's cancer is different, and everyone responds differently to treatment. Because of this, doctors can't tell you exactly what will happen to you. Instead, they can give you the best information they have about what to expect.

QUESTIONS REGARDING TREATMENT

Your specialist should explain what they think is the best treatment for you. This will help you to make an informed decision about what treatment to have. Below are a list of questions regarding treatment.

- 1** What is the purpose (intent) of the treatment?
- 2** Has it spread?
- 3** Do I need one type of treatment or a combination, e.g. surgery, radiation therapy or chemotherapy?
- 4** Do I have a choice of treatments?
- 5** Is no treatment an option?
- 6** What will happen if I don't have treatment?
- 7** What are the expected benefits of the treatment?
- 8** What are the expected side effects of the treatment?
- 9** Will treatment affect my chances of having children?
- 10** Where will I be treated?
- 11** How much will it cost?
- 12** How long will I be having treatment for?
- 13** Can you give me written information about the treatment?
- 14** Can I take some time to think about my choices?

QUESTIONS REGARDING SURGERY

If surgery is a treatment option, here is a list of questions to ask the surgeon

- 1** What are the options for surgery?
- 2** What is the surgery success rate?
- 3** How many nights will I stay in the hospital?
- 4** Which hospitals can I have the surgery?
- 5** What will be the cost of the surgery?
- 6** Is the surgery cost negotiable?
- 7** Will there be any GAP payments for your fees or the surgery?
- 8** If so, what will the costs be?
- 9** Should I get a second opinion?
- 10** Who can I contact if I have more questions?

QUESTIONS REGARDING RADIATION

If you are required to have radiation, here are some questions to ask.

- 1** Will there be any GAP payments for your fees or the treatment?
- 2** If so can you please advise costs
- 3** Is this negotiable?
- 4** Are payment plan options available?
- 5** Is community transport available?
- 6** Are any other tests needed at this stage?
- 7** What are the radiation treatment options?
- 8** What is the data on percentages of that treatment?
- 9** Will I need to have the DOT tattoos?
- 10** When should I start treatment?
- 11** What do I need to do to prepare?
- 12** What does that treatment involve?
- 13** How will I feel? Side effects?
- 14** Do you use Metipel OR X Strata Cream to prevent burning?
- 15** If not what do you use?

The Diagnosis



CANCER NAME: _____

PRIMARY LOCATION: _____

STAGE: _____

GRADE: _____

METASTATIC SITES: _____

OTHER INFORMATION: _____

BUILDING YOUR HEALING FOUNDATION

The Six Pillars of Renewed Resilience

After the shock of diagnosis fades, it's time to rebuild your body, mind, and spirit. These six pillars are the foundation of Renewed Resilience Coaching and Empowered Healing.



NUTRITION:

THE HEALING POWER OF FOOD

“Let food be thy medicine”

A ketogenic-style diet can help starve cancer cells (which thrive on sugar) while fuelling healthy ones with nutrient-dense fats and proteins.

Focus on clean, unprocessed whole foods
— and stay hydrated.

Start here: Swap processed carbs for healthy fats like avocado, olive oil, and nuts. **Explore more:** Kickstart Nutrition eBook or My Cancer Kitchen meal plans.



PLANT MEDICINE:

NATURE'S PHARMACY

Essential oils, herbal teas, and plant compounds can support your immune system, aid detoxification, and soothe emotions.

Examples:

- Frankincense for cellular health
- Peppermint for nausea
- Lavender for calm

Start here: Diffuse lavender and frankincense each night before bed.

TARGETED SUPPLEMENTATION

Certain supplements can enhance treatment tolerance, rebuild the immune system, and reduce inflammation.

Examples:

- Vitamin D3, Zinc, and Magnesium
- Medicinal mushrooms like Reishi and Turkey Tail
- Omega-3s for brain and mood support

Start here: Speak to a qualified practitioner about your baseline bloods and safe dosages.



EXERCISE & MOVEMENT

“Movement is medicine.”

Gentle activity helps flush toxins, build strength, and improve energy.

Examples:

- Walking,
- Yoga & Pilates
- Resistance training,
- Rebounding (mini trampoline)

Start here: Move your body every day — even gentle stretching counts

ELIMINATING TOXIC EXPOSURE

Detoxify your environment by reducing harmful chemicals in food, home, and personal care.

Start here:

- Swap chemical cleaners for DIY toxin-free options.
- Drink filtered water.
- Choose organic where possible.



MENTAL & EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

*“When you shift your thoughts
from fear to hope, your body
begins to heal”*

Healing starts with your mind. Your thoughts, emotions, and beliefs directly affect your biology.

Start here:

- Practice deep breathing or meditation.
- Listen to my “Your Happy Place” Meditation.
- Journal three things you’re grateful for each night.

SUPPORT GROUPS

You don't have to do this alone.

Here are some Australian support services that can provide emotional, practical, and financial help:



Cancer Council
Phone: 13 11 20



HEAD & NECK CANCER AUSTRALIA
Phone: 1300 424 848



National Breast Cancer Foundation
Phone: 1300 737 086



Bowel Cancer AUSTRALIA
Phone: 1800 727 336



Leukaemia Foundation
VISION TO CURE
Phone: 1300 424 848



OVARIAN CANCER AUSTRALIA
Phone: 1300 660 334



Breast Cancer Network Australia
Phone: 1800 727 336



LUNG CANCER NETWORK
LUNG FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA
Phone: 1800 654 301



Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia
Phone: 1800 22 00 99



Can Assist
CANCER ASSISTANCE NETWORK
Phone: 1300 226 277



Lymphoma Australia
Phone: 1800 359 081



pancare FOUNDATION
Phone: 1300 881 698



canteen
Phone: 1800 226 833



Myeloma Australia
Phone: 1800 693 566



rare cancers AUSTRALIA
Phone: 1800 257 600

WHAT'S NEXT — YOUR JOURNEY BEYOND THE DIAGNOSIS

“Healing begins when you take your power back.”

If this guide has given you clarity and calm, imagine what's possible with a full step-by-step roadmap to healing.

Inside the Empowered Healing Course, you'll learn how to:

- Rebuild your health with a science-based nutrition plan
- Master your mindset and emotional resilience
- Detoxify your home and body safely
- Create a healing lifestyle designed for long-term wellness

➔ Enroll in Empowered Healing: Self-Paced Online Course
[HERE:](#)

Or contact us for a fully customised approach



Meet Your Coach!

Hi! I am Justine Brackenrig. Founder of Renewed Resilience Coaching & My Cancer Kitchen

I am a Stage 4 Cancer Survivor and since my cancer journey I have retrained myself as Health & Mindset Coach for Cancer patients.

My mission is to guide patients through fear and confusion into clarity and confidence. Through the Six Pillars of Wellness, I help people create a healing environment where the body can thrive.

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Justine
xx

FINAL THOUGHTS

*“Your diagnosis may have changed
your path — but it hasn’t taken away
your power.”*

Healing is not about perfection.

It’s about daily choices, small shifts, and
the belief that your body is capable of
more than you ever imagined.

Take one small step today — and let that
be the start of something extraordinary.

♥ With love and resilience,

Justine
xx

