

## Supportive Services Update

### January 2026

Happy New Year! This phrase can bring up many feelings for patients, families and staff. Some are relieved that the last year is over. Others are anxious about the new one ahead. Many are hopeful; some are distressed. When dealing with cancer, sometimes it's easier to take it day by day or week by week versus thinking about a whole new year.

Here at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, we support you no matter how you are feeling about the new year. We wish you peace, warmth and cherished moments ahead.

We always love to hear from you so don't hesitate to connect with us at any time:

Laura O'Brien at the Allan Blair Cancer Centre  
306-766-2512

Lindsay Kostyniuk at the Saskatoon Cancer Centre  
306-655-2672



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# Group Spotlight

## One Breath Anticipatory Grief Group

Offered in person in Regina

One Breath is a 5 week anticipatory grief group offered to patients and/or loved ones. The group will allow participants to discuss and share their thoughts and feelings surrounding a terminal illness. We will reflect on topics such as coping strategies, legacy work, self-care, forgiveness, and creating moments of connection.

The next group is being offered in Regina starting February 6 from 1:30-4:00 p.m. To learn more or to register, call 306-766-2973.

### What is Anticipatory Grief?

Anticipatory grief can carry many of the symptoms of regular grief: sadness, anger, isolation, forgetfulness, and depression. These complicated emotions are often coupled with the exhaustion that comes with being a caregiver or the stress of being left alone when someone goes to war or is battling addiction.

We are aware of the looming death and accepting it will come, which can bring an overwhelming anxiety and dread. More than that, in advance of a death we grieve the loss of a person's abilities and independence, their loss of cognition, a loss of hope, loss of future dreams, loss of stability and security, loss of their identity and our own, and countless other losses. This grief is not just about accepting the future death, but of the many losses already occurring as an illness progresses.

Source: <https://whatsyourgrief.com/anticipatory-grief/>



**"The difference  
between  
anticipatory grief  
and bereavement  
is just one breath"**

- Kelly Phillips Palliative  
Care Coordinator

## Sacred Transitions: Life, Loss, Change

Offered in person in Regina

The first Indigenous-led grief and loss support group for cancer patients and their families.

Grounded in First Nations and Métis worldviews, the group recognizes grief as a holistic experience; spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical, often understood through teachings such as the Medicine Wheel. Life and death are viewed as transitions within a sacred cycle, with healing supported through ceremony, community, and ancestral knowledge.

This culturally grounded space is designed to support patients and their loved in feeling safe, respected, and supported within the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, while helping to reduce barriers to accessing grief support. While this group is culturally led, it is welcome to all patients (Indigenous or not).  
Facilitated by Darrel Klyne.

The 6-week group will be held Wednesdays, starting February 4 from 5:30-7:30 PM at the First Nations and Métis Health Centre at the Pasqua Hospital. Call 306-766-2973 to learn more.

# Embracing a New Year

For those who typically make New Year's resolutions every year, deciding on one when you or a loved one has cancer can feel overwhelming. Making big life goals or drastic changes when there are unknowns ahead or you're not feeling well can be daunting and unattainable. It's ok to give yourself permission not to make any resolutions this year. However, if still wanting to set some goals for the year, focus on ones that are small, manageable and will be meaningful for you.

Here are a few ideas:

## **Find a Support System**

There are many cancer support groups available to those who have been affected by cancer. Whether you have cancer or have a loved one who has received a diagnosis, online or in-person support groups are there to help. It is important to find a way to voice your fears, struggles, hopes, or happiness. Talk to an oncology social worker about what groups or online supports are currently available.

## **Nurture Your Soul**

Whether it is through religion, spirituality, meditation, or therapy, finding a way to gain inner peace is helpful in overcoming the stress associated with cancer. Something as simple as singing or dancing to your favorite song can lighten your spirits. Journaling your thoughts can also act as a stress reliever. In the New Year, consider writing a small encouraging note to yourself daily to put in a jar. When you need a boost of joy, read one to remind yourself of all that you have to be thankful for.

## **Improve Your Physical Well-Being**

You may not feel like eating and exercising while undergoing cancer treatment. But taking in the right amount of calories is still really important for keeping up your strength and maintaining a healthy weight. And small amounts of exercise – such as walking around the block or 15 minutes of yoga – will provide long-term benefits, including reducing fatigue, maintaining physical ability and strength, improved sleep, and reducing anxiety and depression. Talk to a dietitian at the Allan Blair Cancer Centre or Saskatoon Cancer Centre for personalized nutrition advice for how to eat well while undergoing cancer treatment. And don't forget to consult your doctor if starting a new exercise routine.

The text "Happy New Year" is written in a large, flowing, orange cursive font. The letters are thick and connected, with a slight shadow effect, giving it a three-dimensional appearance. The background is a light blue gradient.

# Recipe: Roasted Carrot Turmeric Soup

## Ingredients

- 6 medium carrots, peeled
- ½ head garlic
- 3 cups broth (any of mushroom, beef or chicken)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ¼ cup parsley or cilantro (roughly chopped)
- ½ tsp ground turmeric (or 1 ½ tsp fresh)
- ½ orange (juiced)
- ½ tsp sea salt and ground black pepper



## Directions

- Preheat the oven to 375 F.
- Tear off a large sheet of parchment paper. Run under water to soften, then squeeze it dry.
- Lay the parchment out flat, add carrots and garlic in the middle. Season with salt, black pepper, turmeric, orange juice and zest and drizzle with olive oil. Toss well to coat evenly.
- Roll up the parchment with the ingredients in the middle, and fold the ends to create a seal.
- Place on a baking sheet and bake for about 30 to 40 minutes. Or until carrots are soft. Heat broth in saucepan on medium heat for 3-5 minutes or until warm.
- Add ingredients to a blender (discard the garlic skins). Add broth to blender. Blend until smooth.
- Serve with fresh herbs and toasted bread or pumpkin seeds.

## Nutrition Facts

Turmeric is a yellow spice documented to have been used for thousands of years in traditional Chinese and Indian medicine to reduce inflammation. Why all the hype now? Current research studies show that turmeric may play a role in improving health due to its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Research is ongoing and more is needed. What we know right now is that studies suggest that because of turmeric's high antioxidant properties, high amounts could interfere with cancer treatment, so it's best to include turmeric in cooking rather than taking supplements such as curcumin because they can be too concentrated.

If you are trying to add turmeric to your meals, start by pairing turmeric with black pepper for extra health benefits! Not only is this duo tasty, but it also improves absorption.

Having tummy troubles? Most herbs and spices can be used to add flavour, but for those experiencing diarrhea while on cancer treatments, watch out for spicy foods made with curry, chili or hot peppers sauce. These may irritate bowels and cause diarrhea.

To add more calories and protein to this recipe, try topping with 1-2 tbsp of 2% Plain Greek Yogurt or blending in ½-1 cup of 2% cottage cheese during step 6.

# Mind Body Connection



## Tai Chi and Qigong



Tai Chi and Qigong are very old forms of martial art. They combine breathing and slow, fluid movements to help restore balance in the body's energy system. The movements are meant to express the balancing energies of "yin" and "yang" in the body.

"Qi" (or "Chi") means the life force or internal energy in our bodies. Balancing the flow of this energy helps improve our overall health and well-being.

Qigong also uses simple, rhythmic movements, combined with breathing to help bring balance. In traditional Chinese medicine, Tai Chi and Qigong masters teach their students to balance the flow of energy in their bodies to restore health and wellness.

For patients with cancer, Tai Chi and Qigong provide benefit to many of the side effects associated with cancer and cancer treatment. Regularly practicing Tai Chi or Qigong can:

- Calm the mind and emotions. The slow, rhythmic movements combined with deep, relaxation breathing help to bring a sense of peace and grounding.
- Improve balance
- Reduce muscle and joint pain
- Promote clear thinking and focus
- Increase flexibility. Tai Chi and Qigong help to stretch the muscles and improve joint mobility in a safe, gentle way.
- Increase energy
- Uplift the spirits. Practicing Tai Chi and Qigong, especially in a supportive and fun group, has an uplifting effect on one's spirit. Participants in class often report feeling more uplifted after the class than when they first arrived.
- Improve breathing. While practicing Tai Chi and Qigong, participants also practice slow, rhythmic breathing. Deep breathing helps calm the nervous system and bring awareness to how we are breathing when stressed. Once these techniques are learned, we can then use them whenever we need to reduce stress.

People with most levels of fitness can practice Tai Chi and Qigong. Many of the exercises can be done in a sitting position, and participants are encouraged to listen to their bodies and take a break when needed. However, it is always best to talk to your doctor before starting a new physical activity.

# Allan Blair Cancer Centre Groups and Services

## Cancer Transitions Program

A 6 week program for patients who have completed cancer treatment. Issues of survivorship, emotional wellness, nutrition, exercise and moving forward after treatment are addressed.

## Dignity Therapy Service

A brief intervention designed to help conserve the dying patient's sense of dignity. It gives patients a chance to record the meaningful aspects of their lives and leave something behind that can benefit their loved ones in the future.

## Body Image Group

A 6 week course offered once a week which provides you with insight, support, and the tools necessary to guide you on your way to a healthier you.

## Walk and Talk

The "Walk and Talk" group for cancer patients meets weekly on Wednesday mornings, combining light exercise with emotional support. The group provides a safe space to connect with others, share experiences and build supportive relationships. The group meets outdoors in the warmer months and indoors in the winter.

## Wig Studio

Wigs, headwear, and books are available free of charge to cancer patients. Location: Level 1. Monday-Friday 8:00 am-4:00 pm. A volunteer must be present to assist. Contact Laura O'Brien at 306-766-2512.

## One Breath

A five week anticipatory grief group offered to patients and/or loved ones. The group will allow participants to discuss and share their thoughts and feelings surrounding a terminal illness. We will reflect on topics such as coping strategies, legacy work, self care, forgiveness, and creating moments of connection.

## A Life Worth Writing

This 4 week virtual expressive writing group provides patients with the opportunity to reflect, process and express their individual and/or collective experiences, which may or may not be directly impacted by their cancer experience.

## Expressive Art Therapy

Expressive art therapy is a multimodal approach that integrates various forms of creative expression, such as visual arts, music and writing to promote emotional healing and personal growth.

For more information or to register for groups, please call 306-766-2973.



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# Saskatoon Cancer Centre Groups and Services

## Cancer Transitions Program

New program details coming soon.

## Dignity Therapy Service

A brief intervention designed to help conserve the dying patient's sense of dignity by addressing sources of psychosocial and existential distress. It gives patients a chance to record the meaningful aspects of their lives and leave something behind that can benefit their loved ones in the future. Referrals accepted anytime. Ask to speak with a social worker for more information.

## Creative Journeys: Exploring Healing through Art, Writing, Music & Drama

Creative Journeys is designed to nurture self-expression through the creative process. Each week, participants are invited to explore a different art modality- visual art, writing, music and drama- guided by our social work team and a music therapist who bring their own unique approach. Rather than relying on talk therapy, this program opens space for alternative pathways by allowing participants to express emotions, discover resilience and connect with others through creativity.

For more information or to register for groups, please call 306-655-6811

## Volunteer Room/Wig Boutique

Wigs, headwear, and books are available free of charge to cancer patients. Location: CG202. Monday-Friday 9:00 am-3:00 pm. A volunteer must be present to assist you. Contact Cindy Beaulé at 306-655-2688.

## Walk and Talk

The "Walk and Talk" group for cancer patients meets weekly in the fall and spring months, combining light exercise with emotional support. The group provides a safe space to connect with others, share experiences and build supportive relationships.

## Restorative Yoga

Virtual class for patients/support people. Restoration to body, mind, and spirit. Held Saturday mornings throughout the year.

## iRest® Yoga Nidra

Yoga Nidra is a research-based, guided meditation based on the ancient practice of Yoga Nidra (yoga sleep). This meditation uses a clinically proven 10 step protocol effective in reducing stress and anxiety while improving sleep and overall resilience.

Each session will begin with Marie helping you find a restful position for relaxation followed by a guided meditation that will be approximately 45 minutes long. Held Monday evenings throughout the year.

## Saskatoon Cancer Centre Physiotherapy Group

The SCC and Mackie Physiotherapy have joined together to provide a 6 week physio group for our cancer patients. The group is facilitated by physio therapist Melissa Doerksen. This group is for any individual in cancer remission or undergoing cancer treatment. The group will help provide you with strategies and education that can help improve function and quality of life. The group is held on Wednesday afternoons at Mackie Physiotherapy in Saskatoon.



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# Community Spotlight



## Online Support Groups

Wellspring has a range of specialized programs designed to provide connection and belonging; ease pain, fatigue and distress; build strength and mobility; and support financial and workplace challenges.

Wellspring programs are available across Canada online, at no charge, and without referral.

Online groups are available for patients, caregivers and loved ones.

To find a summary of groups available or to register, go to [wellspring.ca/programs](http://wellspring.ca/programs)

**Want to read past editions of  
our Supportive Care Update?**

All of our newsletters can be found on  
the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency  
website at  
[www.saskcancer.ca/SupportiveCare](http://www.saskcancer.ca/SupportiveCare)