WHEN MOM HAS BREAST CANCER: How to say it

Use words your child can understand. Keep it simple.

2–5 YEARS OLD
- Use a stuffed animal to show the site of the cancer.
- Keep answers brief and simple.

6–10 YEARS OLD
- Be ready for questions.
- Talk about how family routines may change.

11–13 YEARS OLD
- Ask how they want to be involved in your care.
- Offer to help them choose what to say to friends.

14–18 YEARS OLD
- Talk on an adult level.
- Help them maintain their lives and socialize outside your family.

There may be times I won’t have energy. Your uncle will take you to school when I can’t.

You can’t catch breast cancer from me.

You might want to let John know what’s happening. It helps to have someone who understands.

I will keep you updated and will answer any questions you have.

Adapted from “Talking to Children About Breast Cancer” on LBBC.ORG

Visit our site for more tips. Original text reviewed by Kathleen Cayne, MSS, LCSW.