

CCLG

The Children &
Young People's
Cancer Association



My brother or sister has cancer

A children's guide to coping with cancer

www.cclg.org.uk

**Expertise.
Progress.
Community.**



**If you have a brother
or sister who has cancer,
this book is for you.**

It tells the story of a girl and boy whose
brother has cancer. If there is anything
you are not sure about, please ask a
grown-up to help you.



This booklet is available as an animation.
Watch online at cclg.uk/brothers-and-sisters



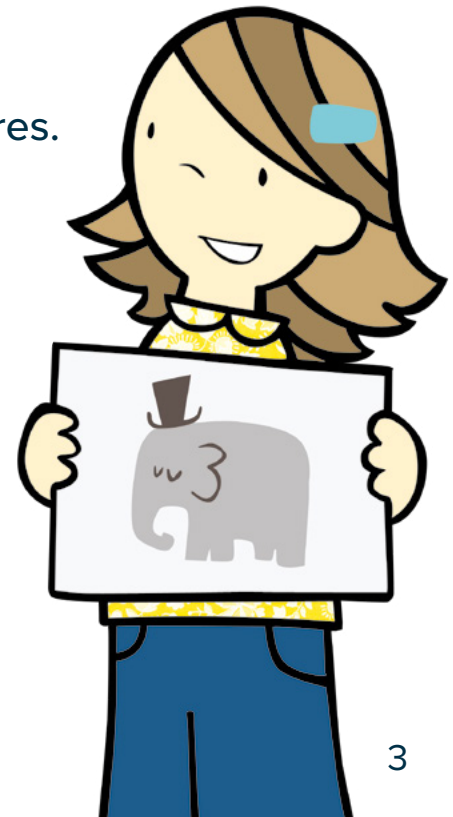
Meet Tom and Jess

They live with their Mum, Dad and little brother Ben.

Tom is the oldest and loves playing football. He practises bouncing the ball on his knee like a top footballer, but he can really only bounce it once before the ball flies off!

Jess is good at drawing pictures. She would like to be an artist when she grows up.

What would you like to be when you grow up



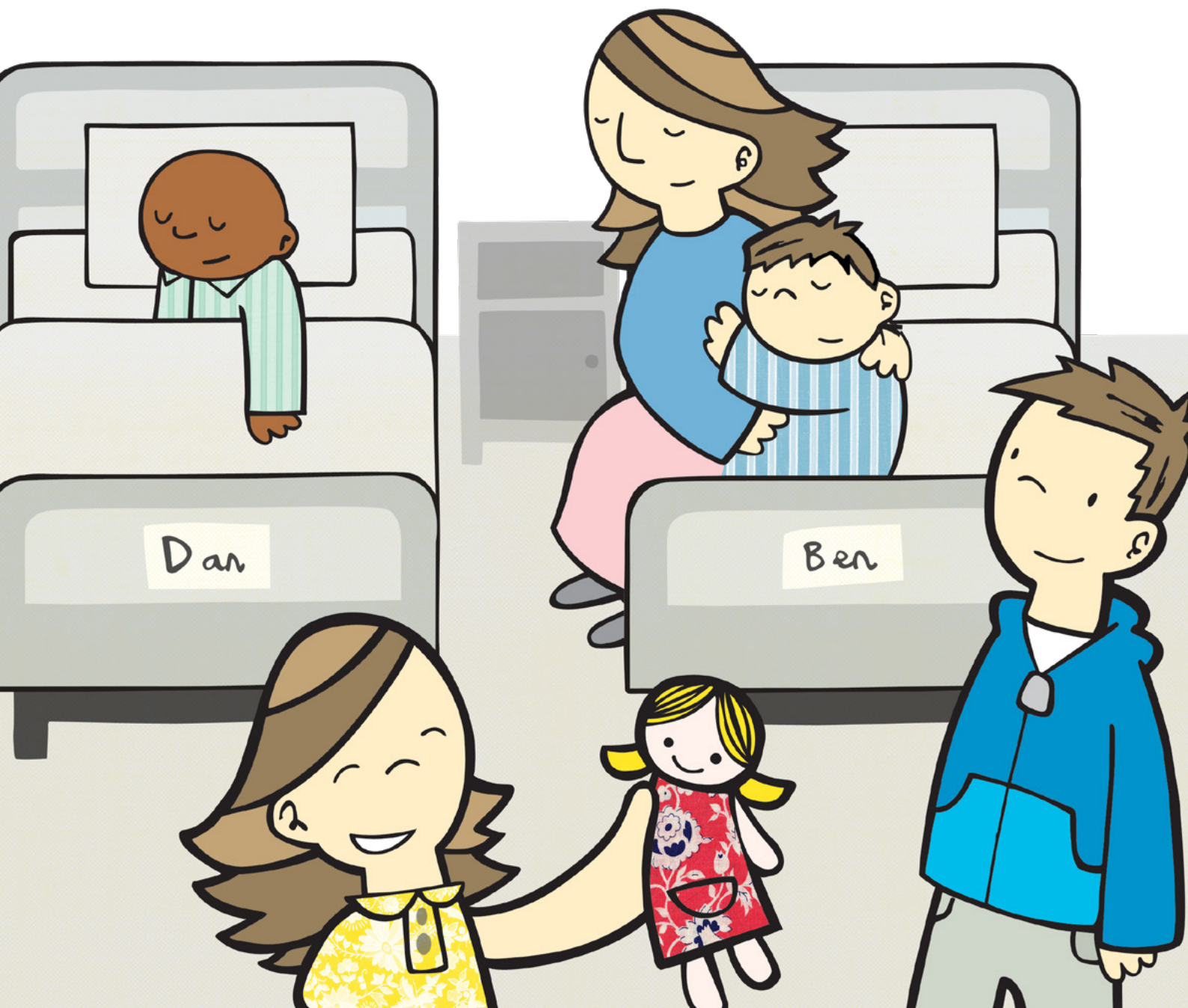
One day, Tom and Jess came home from school and found that Mum and their little brother, Ben, weren't there. Dad said Ben was poorly and had gone with Mum to stay at the hospital.

"Can we go and see him?" asked Jess. So they did, a few days later. The hospital was very big.

Tom and Jess saw lots of different people, like doctors and nurses. Some children were asleep in bed, some looked sad and others were laughing and playing with toys. Some of the children had no hair.

Ben was very quiet and wanted Mum to cuddle him all the time.



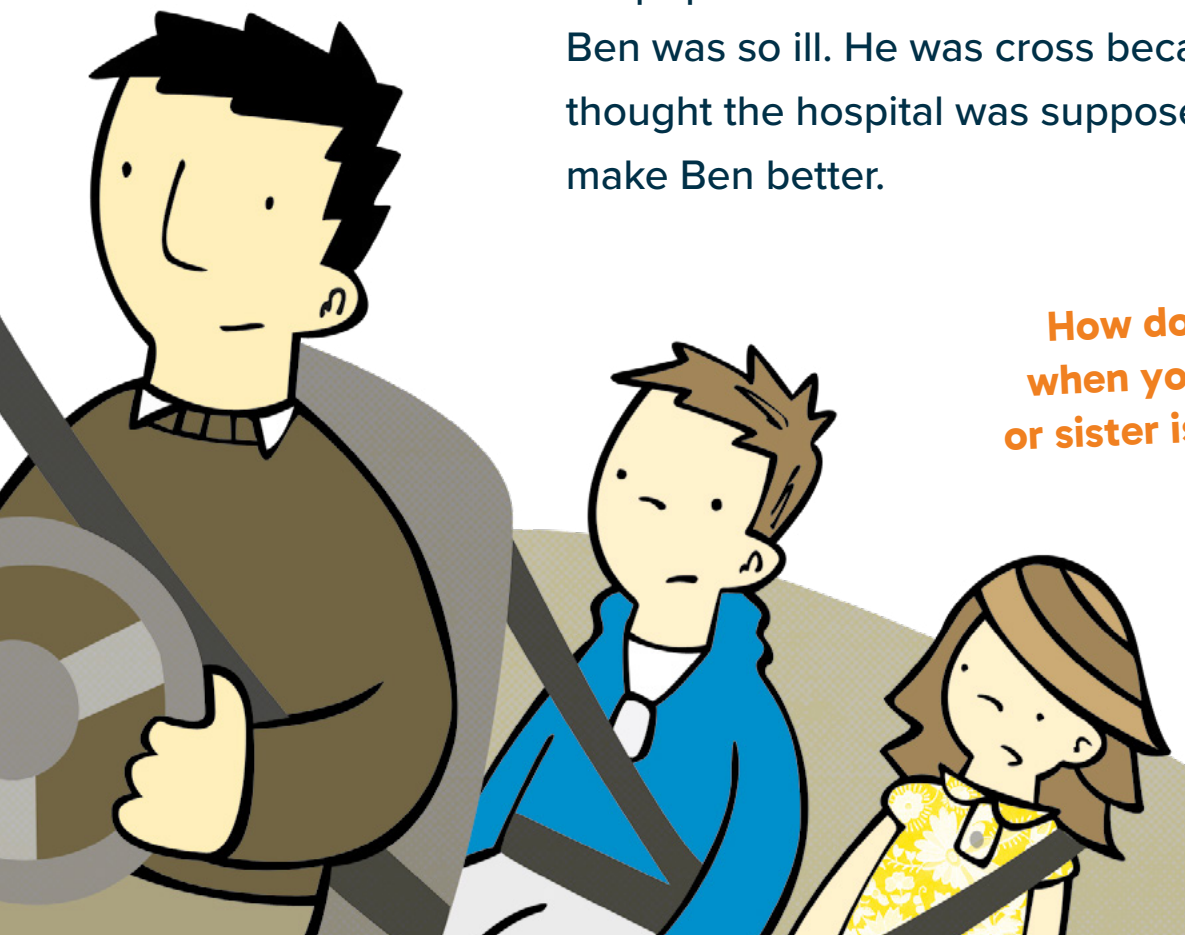


On the way home

Tom and Jess felt sad and worried when they had to go home with Dad, and leave Ben and Mum at the hospital.

On the way home, Dad was quiet. Jess felt upset, but she didn't say anything. Tom didn't keep quiet. He wanted to know why Ben was so ill. He was cross because he thought the hospital was supposed to make Ben better.

How do you feel
when your brother
or sister is in hospital



Dad explained that Ben had an illness called cancer, which makes someone very poorly. He said Ben needed to have strong treatment to help his body get better. Dad said that they all miss Ben and Mum, but that the hospital was the best place for Ben to be so he could have treatment to help him get better.

Did you know...

- Lots of brothers and sisters feel scared, worried and sad about what is happening to their brother or sister, and that's normal.
- Having cancer can feel very unfair.
- Lots of brothers and sisters feel their mum and dad don't love them as much as their poorly brother or sister, but this isn't true.
- Parents love all their children, but sometimes need to spend more time with their poorly child.

Tom and Jess at school

The next day, when Tom and Jess were at school, one of Tom's friends asked why he looked sad. Tom explained that Ben had cancer and was in hospital.

“Our bodies are made up of millions of little parts called cells. Cancer is when some of those cells go wrong. Ben has to keep going to the hospital to have medicine to get rid of the cells that have gone wrong.”

Did you know...

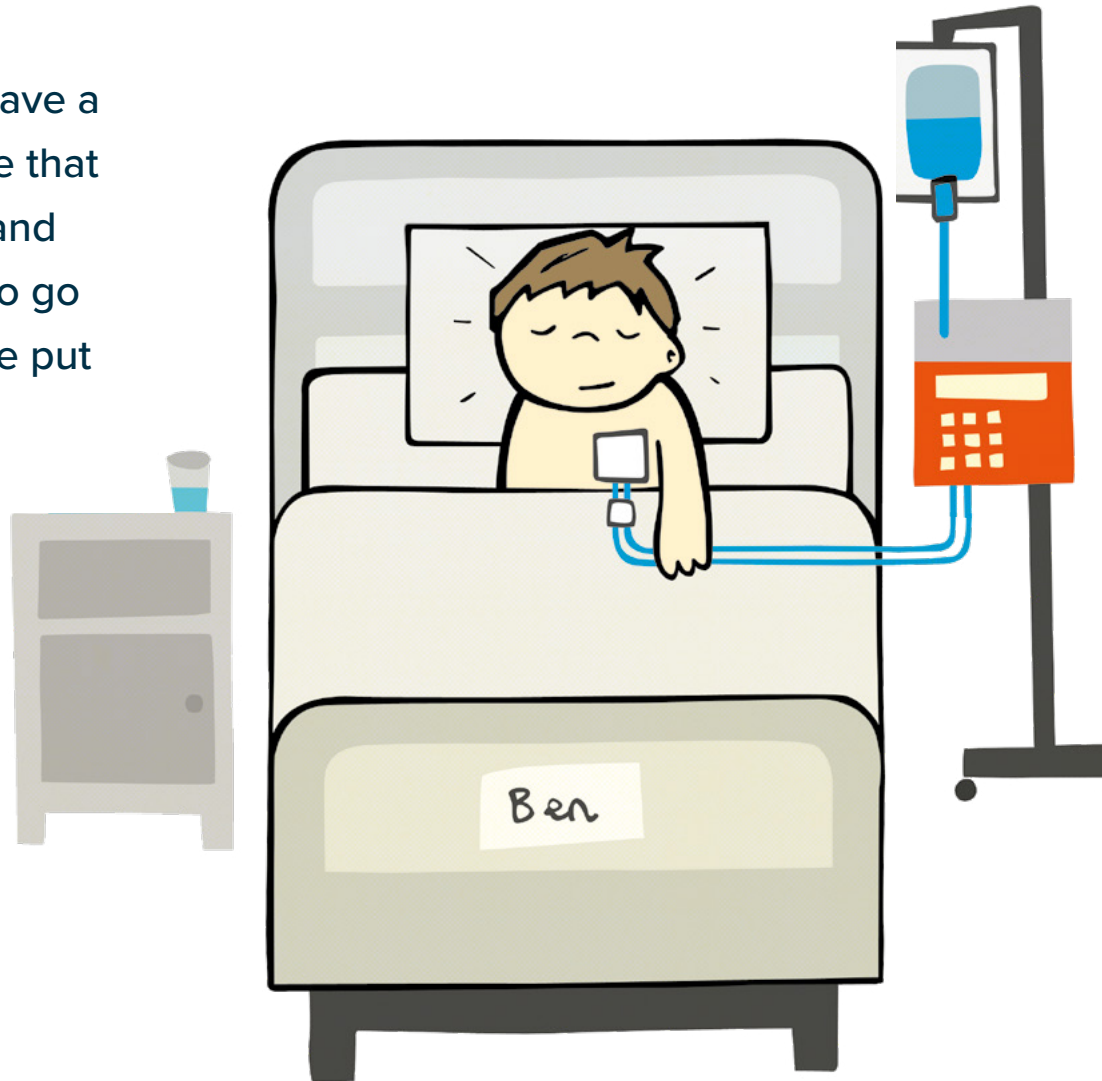
- There are many different types of cancer.
- Very few children get cancer.
- You can't catch cancer from anyone else.
- Children don't get the same types of cancer as grown-ups.



Ben starts treatment

In hospital, Ben's doctor gave him a medicine to make him go to sleep, so he could have a small, long tube put into his chest.

Some children will have a different kind of tube that goes into their arm and they may not need to go to sleep for this to be put in. A tube can also be called a line.



Ben told Tom and Jess that he called the tube his 'wiggly'. Ben's cancer medicine can now be given to him easily through his wiggly tube. Jess wasn't sure about looking at Ben's wiggly, and tried really hard to remember that it would help Ben get better.

Does your brother or sister have a wiggly, or a hidden tube called a port



Did you know...

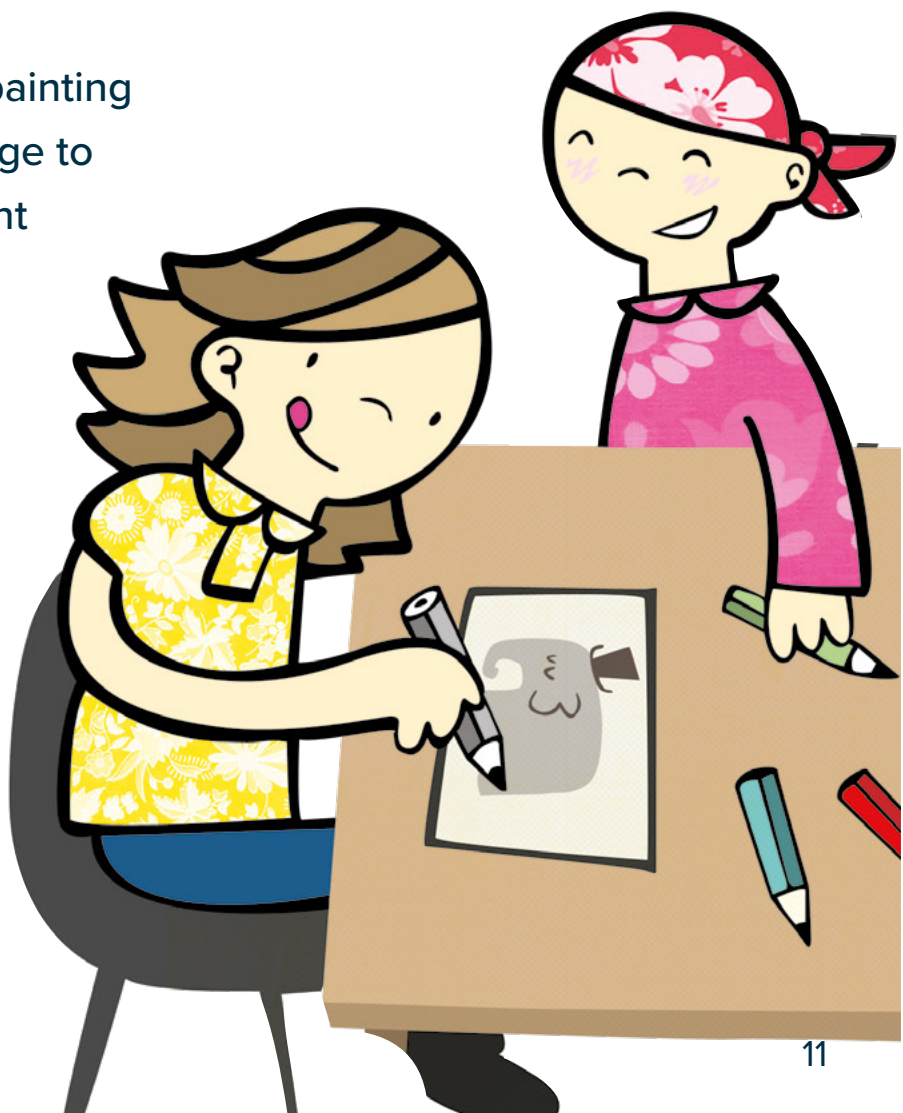
- Children with cancer usually need treatment for a long time, sometimes for more than a year.
- Cancer treatment can make your brother or sister feel poorly, like feeling sick and not wanting to eat properly.
- Nothing you or anyone else did made your brother or sister get cancer.
- It's really hard being the brother or sister of someone who is poorly.

Tom and Jess make new friends

Some days when Tom and Jess visited Ben in hospital, he was a bit better and they all played together. But on other days, Ben was poorly and then Jess felt worried, and didn't know what to do.

One day, some children were painting and Jess plucked up the courage to join in. Jess painted an elephant with a hat on!

What do you
do when you are
at the hospital



Tom started talking to Ismail, who was staying in hospital too.
They decided to play a computer game together.

What type of cancer
does your brother
or sister have
?



Ben comes home

After a few weeks, Ben and Mum came home from hospital. Tom and Jess thought Ben seemed a bit better, but Mum and Dad kept checking he was alright. Ben was very happy to be home with his family and all of his toys!



Ben's hair falls out

A few days later, Ben's hair started to fall out. Although Tom and Jess knew this was because of his cancer treatment, it was still a surprise and Ben did look different. One afternoon, they went to the park with Dad and Ben. Jess could see people were staring at Ben's head and she felt cross and embarrassed. She wished Ben had worn a hat.



In the park, Tom practised bouncing the football on his knee. He thought he was getting better until the ball hit Ben on the head and made him cry.

Dad was cross with Tom for not being careful. Tom was really fed up. He wondered if Mum and Dad only loved Ben now.

Tom felt guilty for hurting Ben, and started to cry. Dad said he was sorry for getting cross and gave them all a big hug. He wondered whether everyone would like an ice cream. Ice cream was Tom's favourite food, so he chose a really big one!

Did you know...

- Hair usually grows back after treatment.
- Sometimes, brothers and sisters feel cross, jealous, or fed up with their poorly brother or sister, or with their parents. It's OK to have lots of different feelings.
- It often helps to talk to someone about how you feel.

Ben goes to clinic

Mum had to take Ben back to the hospital to see his doctor at the clinic. Tom went too. The clinic was busy and they had to wait for a long time. Luckily, there were lots of books, games and toys to play with, which helped the time to pass much faster.

Some children had no hair, and a few had tubes coming out of their noses. Tom began to feel hot and panicky and wanted to run away. He got out his book and decided to concentrate on that instead.



**What do
you like about
coming to the
hospital and what
don't you like**



Tom saw his friend Ismail again. Ismail told Tom he has had three sorts of treatment for his cancer:

Chemotherapy:

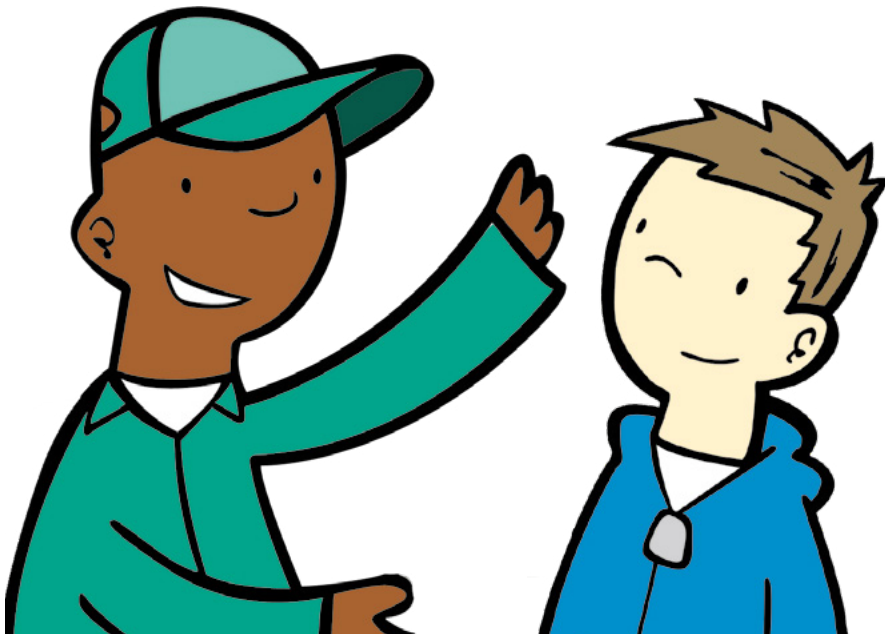
Medicine put into his wiggly, or tablets to swallow

Radiotherapy:

High-energy beams, like X-rays, given by a machine

Surgery:

An operation to take away a lump caused by cancer



Do you know what sort of treatment your brother or sister has had



Jess' sports day

One morning when Tom and Jess woke up, Mum and Ben had gone back to the hospital again.

This time it was because Ben had a high temperature. Jess suddenly remembered today was sports day at school. Now Mum wouldn't be able to come. Jess felt sad and cried all the way to school.



Did you know...

- Children with cancer need to stay away from people with infections, like a cold.
- It isn't anyone's fault if they do catch a cold or infection.
- Sometimes, infections can cause a high temperature, which means children have to go back into hospital.

When Jess got to school, her teacher, Mrs Jakes, was really nice and let her help give out the books. Jess thought Mrs Jakes knew how hard it was to have a poorly brother.

That afternoon, Jess tried really hard at sports day. She got third prize in the egg and spoon race. Jess felt very proud and knew Mum and Dad would be too, when she told them later.



Tom talks to Mum

One night when he was in bed, Tom started to worry that he might have cancer too. Tom switched on the light and checked his body.

It looked OK, but Tom still felt worried and went downstairs to see Mum. When Mum realised Tom was worried, she explained nobody knows why children get cancer, but you definitely can't catch it from someone else.

Tom felt a bit better after talking to Mum. They decided it is much better to tell someone when you are worried than to keep your worries in your head.



If you feel worried or scared, it helps to talk to someone you trust, such as your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, teacher, or friends.

Tom and Jess liked to visit Ben as much as possible when he had to stay in hospital. Jess also liked to talk to him on Mum's phone, so that she could make sure he is OK.

Sometimes, Tom couldn't stop thinking about Ben, so he played football with his friends to make it easier not to worry.



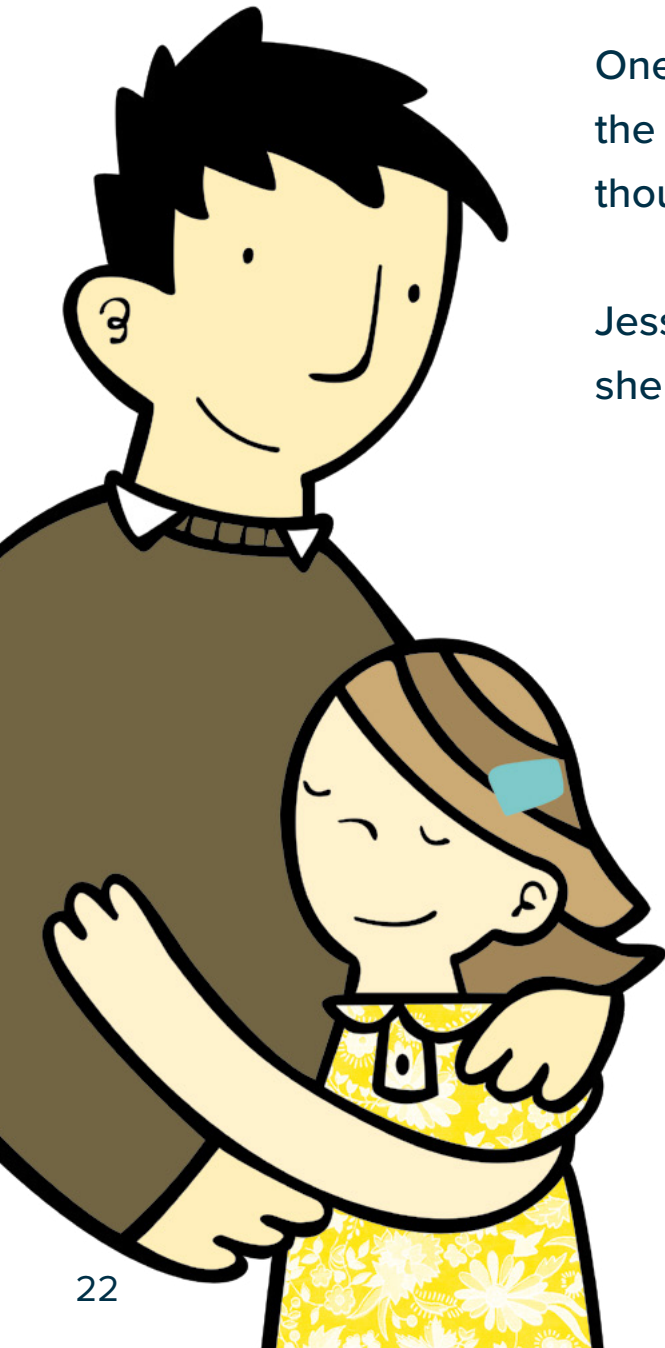
Jess feels frightened

One day when Dad came home from the hospital, he looked very sad and Jess thought he might have been crying.

Jess felt very frightened. “What if Ben dies?” she cried to Dad.

Dad cuddled Jess for a long time while she cried. After a while they started to talk. They remembered that the doctors and nurses will do the very best they can for Ben.

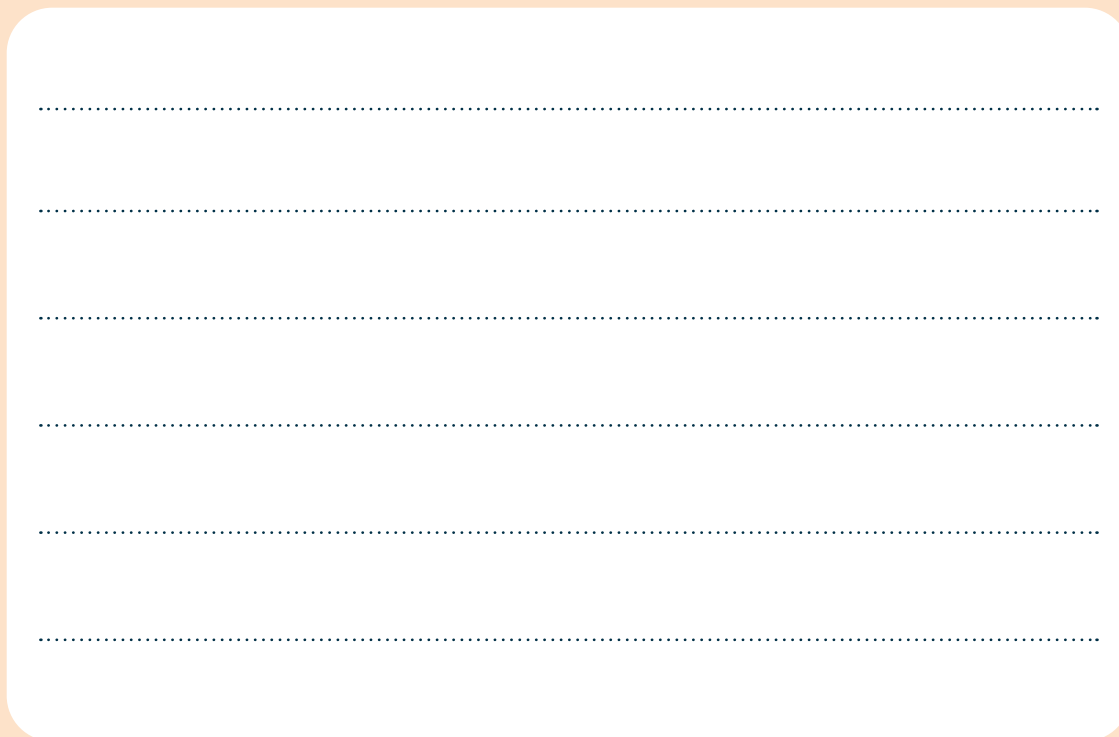
Dad said that whatever happens, they will always love and help each other. Jess felt a bit better.



Do you have any worries?

- Some questions may seem too frightening to ask.

Do you have any questions? You could write them here.



- It's very hard if you don't know whether someone will get better. Sometimes it helps to think about all the good things that might happen.

Tom and Jess keep busy

Ben went in and out of hospital a lot over the next few months, so Mum and Dad were very busy. Tom and Jess tried to carry on as normal by going to school and playing with their friends. Sometimes, their Grandma helped by picking them up from school and cooking tea for them all.

Ben finishes treatment

After a long time passed, Ben's treatment finished although he still has check-ups at the hospital. Tom and Jess celebrated by baking a cake!



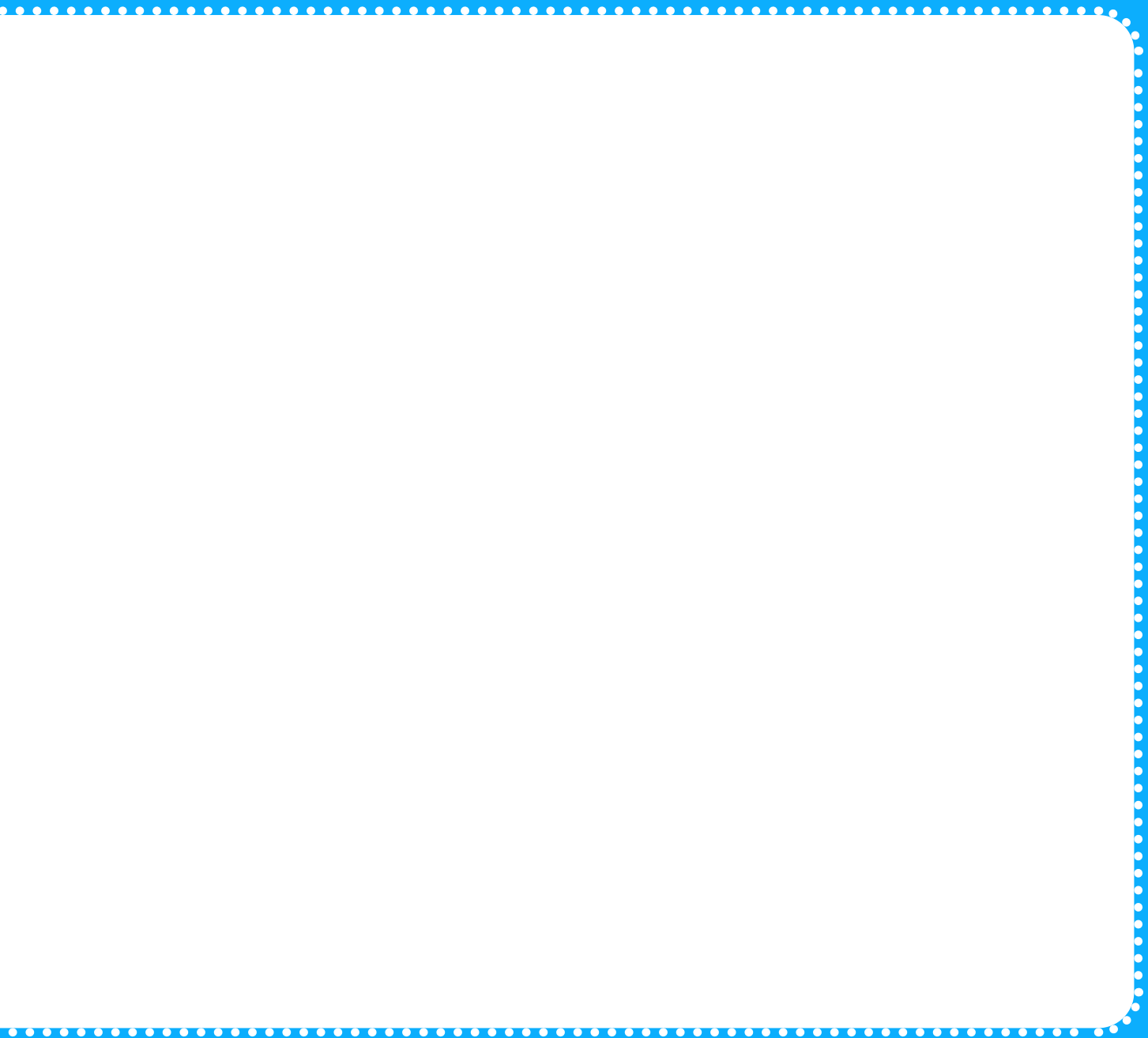
Jess and Tom know Mum and Dad still worry about Ben.
Everyone still worries about Ben sometimes.

Tom, Jess and Ben are looking forward to going on holiday together as a family. And Tom hopes a top football coach will go on holiday to the same place. Maybe he will see how good Tom is, and perhaps one day he will play for a top football team!



Draw a picture or write a story about what has happened in your family since your brother or sister has been poorly.







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CCLG and The Children & Young People's Cancer Association are operating names of The Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group, registered charity in England and Wales (1182637) and Scotland (SC049948).

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This edition: April 2025
Next review date: April 2028



This booklet was reviewed by Penelope Hart-Spencer (Health Play Specialist, The Christie NHS Trust, Manchester), Sarah Punton (Trainee Clinical Psychologist, Southampton) and Leicestershire children and family support service team (CAFSS), in conjunction with the CCLG Information Advisory Group, comprising parents, survivors and multiprofessional experts in the field of children and young people's cancer.

We are CCLG: The Children & Young People's Cancer Association, a charity dedicated to creating a brighter future for children and young people with cancer. Powered by expertise, we unite the children and young people's cancer community, driving collective action and progress.

We fund and lead pioneering research, provide trusted information and guidance for children and young people with cancer and their families, and bring together professionals to improve treatment, care, and outcomes.

Our expert information helps children and young people, and everyone supporting them, to navigate the challenges of cancer and its impact, offering reassurance and clarity when it's needed most.

We make every effort to ensure that this information is accurate and up to date at the time of printing. Information in this publication should be used to supplement appropriate professional or other advice specific to your circumstances.

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