When a Member Shares a Diagnosis

A 3-part checklist for gym owners and coaches

Built with **Yani Fish**, Head of Exercise Oncology at **Compete for a Cure**

A member just told you they have cancer. Your gym can keep them training, safely, through treatment. You don't need all the answers. You need a plan, the right specialist, and a team that knows what to say.

STEP 1

1 Have the private conversation

Do this first, before you change a thing.

- [ ] Find a quiet moment away from the class floor.
- [ ] Thank them for telling you. Let them know they're not alone and the gym has their back.
- [ ] Ask about their treatment plan: surgery, chemo, radiation, and the timing.
- [ ] Ask what they want from the gym. Most people say some version of "I don't want to stop training. I just don't know what I can do."
- [ ] Ask who can know: everyone, just the coaches, or no one.
- [ ] Confirm their medical team has cleared them to train.

Questions to ask:

- "What does your treatment plan look like?"
- "If we could do anything to help, what would it be?"
- "Do you want people to know, or should we keep this between us?"
- "Are you OK with the coaches knowing, so we can keep you safe?"

STEP 2

2 Decide if you need a specialist

Good intentions aren't a training plan. Know where your lane ends.

Likely handle it like an injury return
Lump removed only, with no further treatment
Cleared by their medical team (often around 6 weeks post-op)
Ease them back in slowly, the way you would after any surgery

Bring in a specialist right away
Chemo or radiation
Major surgery, like a mastectomy
Anything else, or anything you're unsure about

How to find a cancer rehab specialist:

- [ ] Contact Compete for a Cure. They support people with breast cancer and can point you to specialists for other cancers too.
- [ ] Contact the charity for that specific cancer and ask for a cancer rehab specialist near you.
- [ ] Search "cancer rehab specialist" plus your city or training style.

Online courses, like Compete for a Cure's Breast Cancer Basics for Coaches, can also help your coaches know what to expect. They're a resource, not a certification.

STEP 3

3 Quietly adjust how your gym runs

Keep them safe without making them feel singled out.

COACHING

- [ ] Use RPE (1 to 10) instead of percentages. A 7 on treatment week is still a 7.
- [ ] Don't scale them back to nothing. Find what they can still do safely from their new starting point.
- [ ] Keep them at the same level as the class: standing when the class is standing, on the floor when the class is on the floor.
- [ ] Check in before class: "Here's today's workout. How do you feel about it?" Have a similar movement ready if the answer is no.
- [ ] Follow the specialist's programming, and give them their own version of the workout where you can.

YOUR TEAM

- [ ] With the member's OK, brief your coaches on what they might see: changes in appearance, low-energy days, and signs they shouldn't train today.
- [ ] Agree on any safety check the specialist needs, and ask it quietly at the start of class.
- [ ] After class, send the specialist a quick note on what the member did and how it went.
- [ ] Set a regular check-in with the specialist to retest and adjust. (Yani's gym does every 8 weeks.)

THE SPACE

- [ ] Wipe down equipment before they use it.
- [ ] Set up their station before class so their modifications don't stand out.

What to Say (and What Not to Say)

INSTEAD OF	SAY
"How are you feeling?"	**"How was your week?"**
avoiding them because you're worried about saying the wrong thing.	**hello. Talk about the weather, the workout, their weekend. They're the same person they were before.**
making every conversation about the diagnosis.	**nothing about it, unless they bring it up.**

Rallying the Gym (With Permission)

- [ ] Ask first. Some members want the support. Some want privacy.
- [ ] If they're OK being named: run a fundraiser workout, an in-house comp, or a trivia night for them.
- [ ] If they want privacy: raise money "for someone close to our hearts," or quietly cover their membership.
- [ ] Never share a member's diagnosis without their OK.

Watch the full webinar: **pushpress.com/resources/support-members-through-cancer**

Find support or donate: **competeforacure.org**

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This checklist isn't medical advice. Always follow the guidance of the member's medical team and a qualified cancer rehab specialist.