



CANCERcare®

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# fact sheet

## YOUNG ADULTS AS CAREGIVERS

**For a young adult, adjusting to the role of caregiver for a loved one with cancer can be a challenge. Individual's ages 21 to 39 have a unique set of needs and responsibilities that can make being a caregiver especially challenging.**

### HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOU IN YOUR ROLE AS A CAREGIVER:

**Keep in mind that being a caregiver can mean many different things.** A caregiver is someone who provides any level of emotional or practical support for their loved one, even from a distance. As a young adult, you may not be the primary caregiver, but know that your role is still valuable. Whether you are thousands of miles away or living in the same household, it's important to be involved in ways that are meaningful both for yourself and the person with cancer. You can help your loved one by making phone calls on their behalf, accompanying them to doctors' appointments, cooking a meal or offering emotional support.



### **Communicate with your loved one.**

Having an open dialogue with your loved one can help you both gain a clear, mutual understanding of your role as a caregiver. Talk to each other about the changes that are happening and how you both are coping. Acknowledge that you may see things differently, and explore ways to come together when you can. Recognize your own limitations regarding the support you are able to provide. Being aware of these limits can help manage your loved one's expectations and avoid disappointment or frustration.

**Be involved.** Talk with your employer or professors about your caregiving responsibilities and how they might impact you at work or school. The more they know, the more they can support you. They may be able to accommodate you with a more flexible schedule or extend deadlines. As a caregiver, you may also have the opportunity to communicate with your loved one's medical team. Remember: you are an important member of your loved one's health care team, but it's important to talk about how involved your loved one would like you to be. You can help your loved one by writing down questions to ask before appointments, assisting in managing side effects and listening and writing down information during appointments.

### **Make your care a priority, too.**

Maintaining your own responsibilities, commitments and lifestyle are important in ensuring that your needs are met as you care for a loved one. If you don't take care of yourself, you won't be able to care for your loved one as effectively as you could. Be sure to make time for self-care: read a book, take a walk, listen to music, meditate or spend time with friends.

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**Ask for help when you need it.** There are many different resources that can help make your role more manageable. Seek out options for a visiting nurse or home health care service to give you an extra hand during times that you feel overwhelmed. Insurance providers, hospital social workers and patient navigators can provide information about these services.

**Seek support.** There are more caregivers your age than you may think. Connecting with a support group can help ease feelings of isolation, provide emotional and practical support and help maintain aspects of your life that were important before cancer. Online support groups can offer this same support while allowing you to maintain a busy lifestyle. Individual counseling with a professional oncology social worker can help you prioritize your responsibilities, set goals and find better ways to cope with being a caregiver.

**Find what works for you.** There is no “right” way to be a caregiver, and everyone responds to this role differently. This is likely very new for you, so give yourself permission to make changes as you go.



### **CancerCare® Can Help**

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercares.org](http://www.cancercares.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.  
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*Edited by Lauren Brailey, MSW, LMSW  
This activity is supported by AbbVie and Bristol-Myers Squibb.*



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