



CANCERcare®

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# fact sheet

## YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM: YOUR DOCTOR IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

The physical and emotional effects of cancer and treatment can be significant. The good news is that help is available from the different people who make up your health care team. It may seem obvious, but it is essential to remember that you are the most important member of your health care team. As with any type of health care you receive, you are a consumer of services, and you should not be afraid to ask questions about what you are getting and who is providing it.

### SOME OF THE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH PEOPLE WITH CANCER INCLUDE:

**Medical oncologist.** A doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating cancers with chemotherapy, targeted therapies and other treatments. They manage cancer treatment and coordinate with the treatment team.

**Surgical oncologist.** A doctor who specializes in treating cancer with surgery.

**Radiation oncologist.** A doctor who specializes in treating cancer using radiation.

**Oncology nurse.** A health care professional who cares for a person with cancer by providing bedside care, preparing and administering treatments, providing supportive care, and educating the person with cancer and their family about their cancer, treatments, and side effects.

**Oncology social worker.** Oncology social workers are professionals who counsel people affected by cancer and help them access practical assistance. They can provide individual counseling, support groups, locate services that help with home care or transportation, and guide people through the process of applying for Social Security disability or other forms of assistance. CancerCare's oncology social workers are available to help face-to-face, online or on the telephone, free of charge.

**Psychiatrist.** A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who specializes in helping people who are depressed and/or anxious. Because they are medical doctors, psychiatrists can prescribe medications such as anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medication.

**Dietitian/Nutritionist.** Diet issues are a possible side effect of cancer treatments. A certified dietitian or nutritionist helps people manage their eating and hydration needs related to cancer and its treatment. They can answer questions regarding decreased appetite, weight loss/gain and chewing or swallowing challenges.



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**Patient Navigator.** Navigators provide guidance through the health care system and help with any issues, challenges or barriers. They may offer practical assistance with financial support, transportation and child care. In addition, they may assist in coordinating care with other health care team members.

**Home Health Aide.** A licensed professional who assists people with their personal care, including bathing, dressing and other activities of daily living. They may also assist with cooking and other household chores.

**Pharmacist.** A professional who is qualified to fill prescription medications. They often provide information on how to take medications, potential drug interactions and tips on taking prescription medication on schedule.

**Clergy.** Prayer, spiritual counseling, and a strong sense of spirituality helps many people face difficult challenges with courage and hope.



### **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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