

For young adults, adjusting to the role of caregiver for a loved one with cancer can be a challenge. Individuals aged 21 to 39 have a unique set of needs and responsibilities that can make being a caregiver especially demanding. This fact sheet covers the following:

- The ways a caregiver can provide support
- The importance of communication
- The preparation needed before providing care



A Caregiver Can Mean Different Things

A caregiver provides any level of emotional or practical support for a loved one. A person can be a caregiver even from a distance, by remaining in contact and checking in.

As a young adult, your role as a caregiver may look different, but is still valuable. There are many ways you can help. You can make phone calls to insurance companies or take them to doctors' appointments. Help with everyday chores can be a big boost. This includes cooking meals or cleaning the house.

Caregivers are also important emotionally. Be there to listen, or share a favorite activity.



Be Open About Your Caregiving

Communicate with your loved one. An open dialogue with your loved one about your role as a caregiver. Talk to each other about the changes that are happening. Discuss how you both are coping. Recognize your own limitations regarding the support you are able to provide. If you are aware of these limits, you can manage your loved one's expectations and avoid disappointment or frustration.

Let others know. 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 give you a more flexible schedule or extend deadlines.

Talk to your loved one about how involved they would like you to be in their medical care. You can help by writing down questions to ask before appointments and going with them to record the answers.. At home, you can help manage side effects or make sure they take their medication.



Asking for Help and Helping Yourself

Ask for help when you need it. There are many resources that can help you. Look for a visiting nurse or home health care service when you feel overwhelmed. Insurance providers, hospital social workers and patient navigators can provide information about these services.

Look for support. As a young adult caregiver, you are not alone. Connecting with a support group can help with feelings of worry and isolation. An oncology social worker can help find individual counseling, help prioritize your responsibilities, set goals and find ways to cope with being a caregiver.

Make your care a priority, too. Your own responsibilities, commitments and lifestyle are also important. 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.

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 resource navigation, 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 master's-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit www.cancercares.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

Facebook: facebook.com/CancerCare | **Instagram:** [@CancerCareUS](https://instagram.com/CancerCareUS) | **Twitter:** [@CancerCare](https://twitter.com/CancerCare)



Edited by Shannon Coon, LMSW

This fact sheet is supported by the Anna Fuller Fund, Bristol Myers Squibb and a grant from Genentech.