



CANCERcare®

800-813-HOPE (4673)
info@cancercaare.org
www.cancercaare.org

fact sheet

LONG-DISTANCE CAREGIVING

For some people, caregiving can come in “untraditional ways.” Many people living with cancer have caregivers who live far away. We refer to those individuals as “long-distance caregivers.” This is a term and an experience that can be unfamiliar and confusing. If you are fulfilling this role, you can be a meaningful part of your loved one’s cancer experience whether you live locally or are caring from a long distance.

SUPPORTING YOUR LOVED ONE

Caregivers who are not local to their loved one can provide significant emotional support, a listening ear, and offer a sense of camaraderie and social support for their loved ones by phone, text, email and via Skype—technology is certainly an advantage and can help you to feel connected and “in the loop.”

Staying in touch and being emotionally available to talk about difficult subjects often helps the patient to feel supported, and can help the long-distance caregiver feel like they are contributing and being helpful. This layer of emotional support is often as helpful as providing physical care, so it is important to keep this in mind.

PROVIDING PRACTICAL HELP

Caregivers can also help with many practical tasks on the medical side of their loved one’s care.

They can coordinate medical appointments and records, and can get to know the medical team and advocate for their loved one’s needs both health-related and otherwise, regardless of their physical location.

Consider sending your loved one a list of questions that you have—they may be able to discuss them with their doctors and get some answers or clarity. This can help you to feel involved, gets your questions answered and also reminds the patient that you’re there for them.

Long-distance caregivers can also help their loved one with day-to-day things to help them get organized; they can manage household bills or finances, organize legal paperwork and direct them to resources and information about things like advanced directives, wills and health care proxies. These are important things to help ensure that your loved one is being well cared for on all levels and across the continuum of care.

You can also help your loved one to enlist additional support. You can arrange for other friends and family to drop off meals or coordinate transportation. You can also learn about local support groups or workshops that they can attend. Patients often rely on their caregivers to take on some of this leg-work when they don’t have the energy, and these tasks usually take a phone call or email so they are well-suited for caregivers who aren’t nearby.



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CARING FOR YOURSELF

Long distance caregivers often struggle with feelings of guilt and wish that they could do more for their loved one with cancer—so remind yourself of all that you are doing, rather than focusing only on what you can't do.

Give yourself credit for the efforts you have made, and check in with your loved one to see if they have any suggestions about how you can continue to be of help to them.

Long-distance caregivers need support too, so reach out to a support group or contact a social worker to help you make meaning out of your caregiver experience. A support group is a unique opportunity to meet and interact with other people who can understand your experience. All of CancerCare's support groups are led by professional oncology social workers who counsel people affected by cancer.

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.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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CAREGIVING RESOURCES

CancerCare

800-813-HOPE (4673)
www.cancercare.org

Caregiver Action Network

www.caregiveraction.org

Family Caregiver Alliance

800-445-8106
www.caregiver.org

National Alliance for Caregiving

www.caregiving.org

Well Spouse Association

www.wellspouse.org

*Edited by Carly O'Brien, LCSW, OSW-C
This activity is supported by AbbVie and Bristol-Myers Squibb.*



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National Office • 275 Seventh Avenue • New York, NY 10001

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