

Parents of children with cancer often put their own needs or feelings aside while caring for their child. Taking care of yourself can help take care of your child. This fact sheet will cover:

- Ways to be prepared and informed
- How to organize the support around you
- Caring for yourself emotionally



Practical Advice for Caregivers

Stay informed. Learn about your child's diagnosis and treatment so you know what to expect. Take notes or ask your doctor if you can record them during appointments. Have someone you trust attend an appointment with you. Your doctors may know of organizations related to your child's diagnosis.

Understand your rights. Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), most employers are required to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for family members who need time off to care for a loved one. For help with insurance rules and regulations, contact your insurance company.

Financial assistance. For many families, cancer can raise financial concerns from treatment costs to transportation to child care. The financial department at the hospital, a hospital social worker, a patient navigator or even your insurance company can help. CancerCare's professional oncology social workers can also help locate financial assistance options. Call 800-813-HOPE (4673) for more information.



Organize Help and Support

Organize help. Consider whether there are chores or other everyday tasks that others can do. Family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers or others can take some duties from you. These can include making meals or caring for pets. This will help you concentrate on your child.

Websites and phone applications provide calendars and other tools for coordinating care. Check with community agencies, religious institutions or your hospital for information on volunteer and respite care programs.

Create a support network. Your spouse or partner, relatives and friends may help, as well as clergy and other spiritual leaders. Your hospital or clinic may know if there is a parent peer matching program or support groups for parents at your child's treatment center.

My Cancer Circle™ (<https://mycancercircle.net>) is an online tool where families and friends can keep track of needs, goals and other information related to the care of your loved one.



Caring For Yourself Emotionally

Take care of yourself. As a parent and caregiver, it can be easy to forget about your own needs. Remember that in order to help your child, you need to take care of your own physical and emotional needs. Continue your own check-ups, screenings and medications. Take a few moments for yourself each day to do something enjoyable or relaxing, even if it's just taking a walk around the block.

Give yourself credit for all you do as a parent and caregiver. It is not selfish to care for yourself, because your emotional health prepares you to care for your child.

Acknowledge your feelings. When a child is diagnosed with cancer, it is common for parents to experience many feelings including shock, anger, disbelief, sadness, fear and guilt. Be honest about how you are feeling and share your feelings with someone you trust. Find ways to express your feelings through writing, art or physical activity.

Seek emotional support. You may feel overwhelmed. Support is available through speaking with a counselor or social worker. Many hospitals have social workers who help families process their emotions and learn coping techniques. CancerCare provides free support services by oncology social workers who specialize in working with children and families impacted by a cancer diagnosis. Learn more by visiting www.cancercare.org/tagged/children or calling 800-813-HOPE (4673).

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

Facebook: facebook.com/CancerCare | **Instagram:** @CancerCareUS | **Twitter:** @CancerCare



Edited by Cassie Spector, LMSW

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