

Caregivers often put their own needs or feelings aside while caring for their loved one. As a caregiver, taking good care of yourself is very important.

This fact sheet covers:

- How to find help and support
- How to stay informed
- Your own physical health and needs
- Your mental wellbeing



Ways to Find Help and Support

Stay organized. Your life may get filled with medications, appointments and other things you must do. If you can, try to take time to plan out your days and weeks to make sure you do not get overwhelmed.

Let others help. People may want to help, but not know how to ask. If they cannot directly help with care, they can help with everyday duties. These can chores, like cleaning the house, walking pets or fixing meals. This will help let you concentrate on your loved one with cancer.

Look for outside groups. Community groups, religious institutions and social workers can provide help or find ways to get the help you need. CancerCare has social workers on staff. Call 800-813-HOPE (4673) for more information.



Keep Yourself Updated and Informed

Know what your loved one needs. The more you understand about your loved one's diagnosis and treatment, the more you can help. You will have a sense of what to expect. With your loved one's permission, you may want to speak to the doctor or nurse if you have any concerns. They can recommend resources for learning more and getting support.

Know who to ask. Find out who can answer questions you might have in the weeks ahead. Your loved one's health care team may include doctors, nurses, oncology social workers, pharmacists and more.



Take Care of Your Physical Health and Needs

Caring for someone can have an impact on your work and health. Try to care for yourself to ensure you can take care of your loved one.

Understand your rights at work. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requires eligible employers to give up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for family members who need time off to care for a loved one with a serious health condition.

You should speak to your loved one's medical team for a certification to show your employer. For help with insurance rules and regulations, contact your loved one's insurance company. Many insurance companies will assign a case manager to address concerns, clarify benefits and suggest ways to obtain additional health-related services.

Keep up with your own check-ups, screenings and medications. Your health is very valuable. Go to your own doctor's appointments and be sure to take any medicines you need.



Take Care of Your Mental Health

Get help for yourself. Caring for a loved one is difficult. You may feel like you have little energy. You may deal with fear, stress and other strong emotions. You may need more than friends or family to talk to. A counselor or social worker can help you cope with some of the emotions or concerns you may be facing.

Do something good for yourself. 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 caregiver. It is not selfish to take some time to refresh yourself.

Join a support group for caregivers. Support groups help many caregivers feel less alone. They provide a safe, supportive environment for sharing feelings. You will be able to discuss the challenges and rewards of being a caregiver. CancerCare offers free, professionally led support groups for caregivers. Call 800-813-HOPE (4673) for more information.

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)**.

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