



CANCERcare®

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

fact sheet

CAREGIVING TIPS: SUPPORTING YOUR SPOUSE OR PARTNER WITH BREAST CANCER

Living with breast cancer presents many challenges, both for the person diagnosed and for their caregivers. There are many ways to help and support a loved one with breast cancer. Because caregiving can be stressful, it's important that you take care of yourself, too.



HERE ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW YOU CAN CARE FOR BOTH YOUR LOVED ONE WITH BREAST CANCER AND YOURSELF:

Communicate with your loved one.

If you're unsure about something, ask. Share your feelings, and listen when your loved one wants to talk. You don't have to offer opinions or solutions – just lend a caring ear.

Respect your loved one's decisions.

Even if you are in a position to share decision-making, remember that your spouse or partner is the one facing cancer and treatment. Decisions about care and life are ultimately up to your loved one to make. It's also important to let your loved one decide how family and friends can help them cope throughout treatment.

Ask how you can help with medical matters.

Would your loved one like you to join them to medical appointments? Taking notes during visits to the doctor can be helpful. Or perhaps you can help by keeping a calendar of doctor appointments. Ask your loved one how you can be involved throughout treatment.

Volunteer to manage the financial paperwork.

Your loved one's cancer treatment will generate a lot of paperwork. You can help by offering to take care of important paperwork like medical records, bills or insurance claims.

Offer to take responsibility for practical needs. Driving to medical appointments, filling prescriptions, doing household chores – offer to do some of these tasks yourself, or ask family members and friends if they can pitch in and help.

Know your rights. Talk with a social worker about benefits for which you or your loved one may qualify. For example, under the Family and Medical Leave Act (a federal law), you may be entitled to unpaid leave from your job in order to care for your loved one.

Give your loved one “space” for emotional ups and downs.

Living with breast cancer can be an emotional roller-coaster ride. Understand that your loved one will have good days and bad days.

(over)

Help your loved one feel good. Breast cancer can cause people to feel self-conscious about physical changes caused by treatment. Encourage your loved one to learn about options for coping with physical changes and to try different solutions until your loved one is comfortable.

Talk about intimacy. Breast cancer may cause conflicting feelings about physical closeness. Ask your loved one how much closeness is needed and feels comfortable. Hugging and holding hands can be simple ways of staying physically connected.

Take time to care for yourself. While caregiving is often rewarding, it can sometimes feel like a full-time job. Plan a few moments to do something for yourself each day, even if it's just taking a walk around the block. It's normal for a caregiver to feel helpless or angry sometimes. Allow yourself to experience and accept your feelings. If some of your emotions are too difficult to cope with, speak with a professional counselor or oncology social worker. CancerCare offers free individual counseling for both people with cancer and their caregivers.

Join a support group. Support groups let you connect with others going through similar situations. They give you a chance to talk about the challenges or rewards of caregiving, for example, and to share tips and resources with other group members. CancerCare offers free face-to-face, telephone and online support groups led by professional oncology social workers.



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)**.

Facebook: [facebook.com/cancercare](https://www.facebook.com/cancercare)

Twitter: @cancercare



CANCERcare®

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

© 2016 CancerCare®