



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

# COPING WITH CANCER DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Holidays are traditionally viewed as a time to celebrate. Many people enjoy reuniting with family and friends, exchanging gifts and celebrating religious traditions during this time. However, sometimes people with cancer and their loved ones feel “out of step” from the rest of the world during the holidays. In fact, the holiday season can prompt new questions, such as: How do I take care of the holiday rush and myself at the same time? How can I celebrate when I have so many other things on my mind? What will my life be like next year? Sharing these concerns with the people you love and who love you can help you feel more connected.

## HERE ARE SOME ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR COPING WITH CANCER DURING THE HOLIDAYS

**Make plans to get together with friends, family or co-workers over the holidays.** Trying to celebrate alone can be very difficult, so accept some invitations from others or join an organized group activity through your local YMCA, YWCA or place of worship. Find the right balance between celebrating with family and friends and spending time on your own. Give yourself permission to pace your activities and to decline an invitation or two so that you have the energy to enjoy the gatherings that are most important to you.

**Create a new holiday season tradition that makes the most of your energy.** Change your usual holiday activities so you relieve yourself of some of the pressures of entertaining. Have a potluck, with family members each bringing a dish for the meal, have someone else host the meal or suggest eating out at a favorite restaurant.

**Enjoy special moments.** Try to focus on new traditions that have been established, rather than on how cancer has changed a holiday or special occasion.

**Talk to your health care team about upcoming special events.** They may be flexible about appointments in order to accommodate travel or other needs.

**Be an innovative shopper or gift giver.** Try online shopping this year. You can also make a gift of sharing your thoughts and feelings. Write a short note or make a phone call to let others know that you are thinking about them.

**Express your feelings in ways that help you receive the support of the important people in your life.** Tears can bring a sense of relief. Laughter can be relaxing. Sharing can be comforting. It is common to experience a mixture of anticipation, excitement and apprehension about the future. Let your feelings breathe, and talk them over with a loved one, friend or professional counselor.



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**Celebrate strengths you and your loved ones have developed.** Many families who face the day-to-day challenges of cancer discover strengths and courage they didn't know they had. Reflect on the strengths you have developed, and build on them during the holidays.

### **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 master's-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercares.org](http://www.cancercares.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

**Facebook:** facebook.com/CancerCare

**Instagram:** @CancerCareUS

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### **STAYING CONNECTED DURING THE HOLIDAYS**

**Calling.** Talking on the phone is a great way to connect with loved ones.

**Emailing or texting.** Emails and text messages provide fast and easy communication.

**Recording special occasions.** Consider recording friends, family and special events as a way to bring the celebration to your loved ones. Many cell phones have a built-in camera that allows you to film any event and then email it to friends and family.

**Video Calling or FaceTime.** Most smart phones and computers have technology that allows people to see and talk to each other online in real time, like a video telephone. Each person needs a device with a camera and an internet connection. Some services are built-in to your device and some must be downloaded, but many are free. Try asking a family member or friend to help you find or use services like FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, Skype or WhatsApp.

*Edited by Alyson Erardy, MSW, LMSW  
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