

Holidays and special occasions are when many families gather together to create long-lasting memories. For those facing a cancer diagnosis, however, holidays and special occasions may be a challenge. The traditional things that make events special may be hard for them. This fact sheet will cover how to:

- Prepare for holiday seasons and special occasions
- Understand limits
- Support your loved one emotionally



Stay Organized and Prepared

Many doctors' offices and pharmacies are closed for certain holidays and events. Try to plan ahead for what you might need.

Communicate with your health care team. Make sure your loved one has the required prescriptions and that their treatment appointments will continue, if needed. You should know who to contact in case of emergencies.

Be organized. Holidays and special occasions can be very busy. If you are organizing a meal or gathering, try to get everything you need beforehand. Plan for what traditions might need to be skipped this year. Allow yourself to work at your own pace and arrive at or leave events as you and your loved one needs.



Do Not Try to Do Too Much

Respect your loved one's decisions. Your loved one may not feel ready to join large gatherings. They may want to spend time by themselves or only with a few people. Try to be honest about their wishes and expectations and do not push your own desires.

Practice self-care. The pressures of decorating, buying presents and preparing special foods can make your caregiving duties difficult. As a caregiver, you may feel sadness, anger, resentment, frustration or even loss of hope. Try to take breaks for yourself and honor the good things you do.

Try out new memories. Your loved one may not be able to join normal holiday activities or traditions. You can still find new ways to celebrate together. Focus on the present and remain respectful of your loved one's strengths and weaknesses.



Support Your Loved One Emotionally

For most, holidays and special occasions are a time of joy and happiness. However, for those with cancer, it can be a time of stress. How can they balance the needs of family and friends when they are not in the mood to celebrate? You may have your own needs and concerns, but do not want to be insensitive.

Understand. Your loved one may not be in the mood to celebrate. See things from their point of view. Their own experience and needs can mean more than the usual images and feelings of the occasion or holiday season. Try to be open and honest about what matters to both of you.

Find support. CancerCare offers caregiver support and workshops to help process the experience of a caregiver. Organizations like Imerman Angels (<https://www.imermanangels.org>) and Cancer Hope Network (<https://www.cancerhopenetwork.org>) can connect you to other caregivers who understand your concerns for peer support. They may be able to provide insights into what worked for them.

Friends and family can help. Other loved ones can help. Sometimes other loved ones may not know how to ask. Helping cook or bake, decorate, or even do simple chores can take these duties away from having to be done yourself. 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.

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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