



CANCERcare®

1-800-813-HOPE (4673)

Email info@cancercaare.org

Web www.cancercaare.org

Caring Advice for Caregivers: How Can You Help Yourself?

Caregivers are individuals who provide emotional and physical care for a person with cancer. Being a caregiver can be a full time job, and caregivers often put their own needs or feelings aside while caring for their loved one. Taking good care of yourself is an important part of being a caregiver. This can improve your quality of life and help you be better equipped to handle your caregiving responsibilities.



Here are some tips for taking care of yourself when you're a caregiver:

Organize help. Decide which of your loved one's needs you can or would like to meet on your own and which ones you need help with. Then ask family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers or professionals to share the care. Ideally, many people will want to help. Realistically, only one or two people may be available. Still, these individuals can make a big difference. Check with community agencies, religious institutions, or your hospital social worker for information on volunteer and respite care programs.

Become informed. Learn about your loved one's diagnosis and treatment so you 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. He or she can recommend resources for learning more and getting support. Find out who else on the health care team (such as an oncology social worker, oncology nurse, or pharmacist) is available to you if you have any questions.

Understand your rights. Under the Family and Medical Leave Act, 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. 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. Stay on top of your doctor appointments, and find a good

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system for remembering to take any medicines you need to stay healthy.

Join a support group for caregivers. Support groups help many caregivers feel less alone. They provide a safe, supportive environment for sharing your feelings and discussing the challenges and rewards of being a caregiver. Group members provide a listening ear and share tips and resources they've learned along the way. CancerCare offers free professionally led face-to-face, telephone and online support groups for caregivers.



Get individual help. As a caregiver, you may sometimes feel overwhelmed and need more than friends or family members to talk to. Speaking with a counselor or social worker can help you cope with some of the emotions or concerns you may be facing. CancerCare provides free individual counseling from oncology social workers who specialize in helping people with cancer and their loved ones and caregivers.

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, and find ways to reward yourself for your hard work.

CancerCare® Can Help

CancerCare's professional oncology social workers understand the challenges caregivers face. We are available to work with you one-on-one to develop strategies for coping with the emotional or practical challenges that come up as you care for a loved one with cancer. CancerCare also provides support groups, education, financial assistance, and referrals to other resources. To learn more about how we help, call us at **1-800-813-HOPE (4673)** or visit www.cancercare.org.



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