

Tips for Caregivers

Online version with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/caregiver>

Caregivers may be spouses, partners, children, relatives, or friends who help the patient with activities of daily living and health care needs at home. The caregiver works with the health care team and has an important role in improving the patient's health and quality of life.

Caregivers have the important job of watching for changes in the patient's medical condition while giving care.

Caregiving can include helping the patient with medicines, doctor visits, meals, schedules, and health insurance matters. It can also include giving emotional and spiritual support, such as helping the patient deal with feelings and making hard decisions.

The caregiver's role changes as the patient's needs change. Different stages of care can be at diagnosis, during treatment at the hospital, during care/treatment outside of the hospital, during care in the home, after treatment ends and at the end of life, if applicable.

Content adapted from websites below.

Caregivers need to be mindful of their own health.

Caregiving can be demanding; caregivers may need help and emotional support themselves. Caregivers will provide the best care to their patients when they are well taken care of.

- Take a break from caregiving. Even if it is only 15 or 20 minutes a day, make sure you do something just for you.
- Exercise and Eat healthy. Whether it is a 20 minute walk outside or taking a yoga class, exercising is a great way to take a break, decrease stress and enhance your energy. Your health and nutrition is just as important as your loved one's, so take the time to eat well. If you are having difficulty doing that, ask for help and get others to fix meals for you.
- Seek professional help. Many caregivers have times when they feel lonely, anxious, guilty, angry, scared, frustrated, confused, lost and tired. If you feel like these feelings are overwhelming you, call your doctor, hospice or another community resource for help.

Find YOUR Support System. Many find one of the best ways to cope with stress, uncertainty, and loneliness is to talk to others who share similar experiences. You can learn from the personal experiences of others how to be effective in your new role as a caregiver.

Work Options. If you are a working caregiver, it is important to discuss your needs with your employer. Telecommuting, flextime, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), job sharing or rearranging your schedule. Increasingly, companies are offering resources and programs to help caregivers.

Involve Older Children. Older children may be able to assist you and/or your loved one which can help them become more empathic, responsible, and self-confident and give you needed support.

Ask Others to Help, Do What You Can, Admit What You Can't. You can and should ask other family members, friends and neighbors to share in caregiving. They may be willing to provide transportation, respite care, and help with shopping, household chores or repairs. Create a list of things that need to be done, such as grocery shopping, laundry, lawn care, or spending time with your loved one or friend, and keep handy. If someone says, "let me know if there is anything I can do to help" you can refer to the list.

Local Organizations providing support for anyone impacted by cancer:

Cancer Wellness Center	Northern Suburbs	Cancerwellness.org	847-509-9595	Programas en Español
Gilda's Club Chicago	Chicago	Gildasclubchicago.org	312-464-9900	Programas en Español
Living Well Cancer Resource Center	Far West Suburbs	Livingwellcrc.org	630-262-1111	
The Cancer Support Center	South Suburbs	CancerSupportCenter.org	708-798-9171	
Wellness House in Chicago	Northwest & West Suburbs	Wellnesshouse.org	630-323-5150	

Access an interactive map of these local resources at: <http://cancer-help.me/communitycancerresourcecenters>

Resources for Additional Information:

- [American Cancer Society, Caregivers & Family](#)
- [LIVESTRONG, For Caregivers](#)
- [NIH, Support for Caregivers of Cancer Patients](#)
- [American Medical Association, Caregiver Self Assessment Questionnaire](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Caregiving](#)
- [NCI, Caregivers Support, with Advanced Cancer](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Caring for a Loved One](#)
- [Caregiver Action Network](#)
- [National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, Caregiving](#)
- [National LGBT Cancer Network](#)

Recursos en Español:

- [American Cancer Society, Para la persona a cargo del cuidado de alguien con cancer](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Consejos para los proveedores de cuidado: ¿](#)
- [NIH, Apoyo para quienes cuidan a pacientes con cáncer](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Atención de un ser querido](#)