

Tips to Manage School Issues

Internet version of this handout with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/school>

After you are diagnosed with cancer, one of your concerns may be how to handle both school and treatment. Depending on your treatment plan, you may be able to continue to attend school and keep up with schoolwork, with short breaks for appointments and treatment, or you may need to take more time off from school.

Talking with staff

If you need to take a long break from school, need to miss class frequently, or struggle to complete schoolwork, contact your school to discuss these situations. Depending on the school, you may need to talk with the registrar, your advisor, instructors and/or professors. If possible, the best time to discuss the issues or options listed below is before treatment begins and before returning to school after a long absence:

- Attendance, since you may need to miss days or classes for treatment and appointments
- Any accommodations you might need such as fewer classes, a shortened school day, a closer parking space, or additional time to complete assignments or tests
- Some hospitals have educational coordinators or social workers who can meet with school staff to explain your situation and needs.
- If possible, ask your doctor to give you an estimate for how long and how often you may be away from school.

Staying involved

There may be times during treatment when you can't go to school on a regular basis. However, staying involved with school can help you feel like you're missing less and make it easier to return when you are ready.

- Keep in touch with your friends, through texting, instant messaging, video chats, e-mail, phone calls, or visits.
- Ask a classmate to take notes for you if you need to miss a class.
- Ask teachers, instructors, professors if you can photocopy their notes or tape record their class.
- Try to arrange to attend school for special events that are important to you.

Keeping up with schoolwork

You may expect yourself to keep up with the demand of school or expect yourself to resume school at the level you did before cancer, but going to school may be tiring during and after cancer. Take it easy at first and don't overdo things. Your health is the most important priority. Be aware of your body's energy level and take breaks, or delay restarting some activities until your energy level improves. Sometimes talking through your responsibilities and expectations with another person can help you re-prioritize your tasks.

If you find that school is harder than it used to be or you have more difficulty keeping up with your schoolwork, ask for help. Some cancers and treatments can affect your ability to concentrate, your memory, your ability to understand reading material or your ability to put thoughts together. Some of these challenges may be temporary, or some may last longer. Not everyone will have difficulties with learning during and after cancer treatment, but if you notice differences talk with your doctor about your concerns and talk to your school about possible options to make school possible for you.

Adapted from: <https://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/teens/family-friends-and-school/cancer-and-school>

Legal Rights:

The following 3 federal laws help protect the rights of students with educational needs resulting from cancer treatment:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – Section 504

Resources for Additional Information:

- [Scholarships and Resources, National Collegiate Cancer Foundation](#)
- [Scholarships, Cancer for College](#)
- [Gildas Club Chicago, GCC@School: Cancer Support for the Classroom](#)
- [College Scholarships.org](#)
- [Dana-Farber, Cancer Institute, Tips for Starting College During Cancer Treatment](#)

Información Española

- [American Cancer Society, Para la persona a cargo del cuidado de alguien con cáncer](#)