

Tips for Caregivers

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

Adapted from National Cancer Institute Cancer.gov <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/family-friends/family-caregivers-pdq>, Acknowledging You Need Assistance <http://www.caringinfo.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3339> and WellnessHouse Tips for Caregivers and How Wellness House Can Help

Caregivers may be spouses, partners, children, relatives, or friends who help the patient with activities of daily living and health care needs at home. *It is important that the caregiver is a part of the team right from the start.*

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.

The caregiver works with the health care team and has an important role in improving the patient's health and quality of life. Caregiving includes everyday tasks such as helping the patient with medicines, doctor visits, meals, schedules, and health insurance matters. It also includes giving emotional and spiritual support, such as helping the patient deal with feelings and making hard decisions. The family caregiver has the very important job of watching for changes in the patient's medical condition while giving long-term care at home. Family caregivers can help plan treatment, make decisions, and carry out treatment plans all through the different parts of treatment.

Caregivers may need help and emotional support themselves

Caregivers need to be mindful of their own health, too.

Caregiving can be demanding. Caregivers will provide the best care to their patients when they are well taken care of.

Find YOUR Support System. When a friend or loved one is diagnosed with cancer, it's an emotional time. Roles and expectations may change (or you may wonder if they are going to change). Sometimes it's difficult to talk with your loved one about your feelings, because you both have so much going on. 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 can help to minimize stress. Increasingly, companies are offering resource materials, counseling, and training programs to help caregivers.

Involve Older Children. Older children living at home may be able to assist you and/or your loved one. Such responsibility can help young people 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 to share in caregiving. A family conference can help sort out everyone's tasks and schedules. Friends and neighbors also 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, errands, lawn care, housecleaning, 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.

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.

See Resources Below, subscribe to caregiving newsletters or list serves for support, attend a support group for caregivers in person or online.

Local Organizations providing support for anyone impacted by cancer:

UnityPoint Health Cancer Support Services	Downtown Peoria	https://www.unitypoint.org/peoria/services-cancer.aspx	309-672-4224
OSF St. Francis Cancer Support Services	Downtown Peoria	https://www.osfhealthcare.org/saint-francis/services/cancer/cancer-support-services/	309-308-0200
Hult Center for Health Living	Central Peoria	https://www.hulthealthy.org/	309-692-6650

Websites/National Organizations:

- [American Cancer Society](#) (800) 227-2345
- [American Cancer Society, Caregivers and Family](#)
- [LIVESTRONG, For Caregivers](#) (855) 220-7777
- [Cancer Support Community, Caregivers](#)
- [NCCN, Patient and Caregiver Resources](#)
- [NIH, Support for Caregivers of Cancer Patients](#)
- [NCI, Support for Caregivers, When Someone You Love Has Advanced Cancer](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Caring for a Loved One](#)

- [Caregiver Action Network](#)
- [National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, Caregiving](#)
- [National LGBT Cancer Network](#)

Información Española

- [American Cancer Society, Para la persona a cargo del cuidado de alguien con cancer](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Consejos para los proveedores de cuidado: ¿Cómo puede ayudarse usted mismo?](#)