

Caring Advice for Caregivers: How Can You Help Yourself?

Being a caregiver can be a full time job. Focusing on your own needs is an important part of that job. Here are some ideas on how to cope with the challenges of caring for your loved one as well as yourself.

- ☞ **Organize help:** Decide which of your loved one's needs you can or would like to meet on your own, and which you could use help with. Then ask friends, family members, neighbors, co-workers, or professionals to share the care. Ideally, many people will want to help. Realistically, you may find only one or two, but those people can make a difference. Also, check with community agencies, religious institutions, or your hospital social worker for information on volunteer and respite care programs.
- ☞ **Seek support:** Attend a support group for caregivers. Talking to other caregivers who will understand how you feel and share how they are coping with the same situation can help you feel less alone. Individual counseling provides you with an opportunity to explore some of the complexities of being a caregiver and managing/preserving your own daily routines. CancerCare offers free individual and group counseling to caregivers across the country.
- ☞ **Become informed:** Use your health care team for support. Speak to the doctor or nurse with your loved one's permission. Create a list of questions, and write down the answers so you can refer to them again. Ask who else on the health care team is available to you (for example, an oncology social worker, oncology nurse, pharmacist, etc.)
- ☞ **Understand your rights:** Be aware of 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 an insurance company case manager. Many insurance companies will assign case managers to help you manage insurance concerns, clarify benefits, and suggest ways to obtain additional health-related services.

- ☞ **Do something good for yourself:** Plan a few moments for yourself, even if it's just a walk around the block. Treat yourself and give yourself rewards for the work you do.

CancerCare Can Help

CancerCare's staff of professional oncology social workers can help caregivers cope with the diagnosis of a loved one. Our social workers offer individual counseling and support groups via the telephone, internet, or in person. CancerCare also offers education, financial assistance, and information and referrals to other resources to help you and your loved one.

