



Tips when caring for a loved one with cancer



As a caregiver, you play an important role to help your loved one manage their treatment and everyday needs. Learn about what to expect after a cancer diagnosis, how to support your loved one, and how to care for yourself.



How could my loved one react to their cancer diagnosis?

Everyone reacts to a cancer diagnosis differently. Some common emotions include:

- Feeling angry or frustrated
- Feeling fearful or anxious
- Blaming themselves for getting cancer
- Acting passive and refusing to do things for themselves

Whatever their reaction, remember that their emotions are normal responses to coping with a cancer diagnosis.



How can I support them?

Your support matters a great deal to the person you care for. Here are some tips that may make it easier for you and your loved one to communicate and find a routine:

- **When talking with your loved one, the most important thing is to listen.** Try to hear and understand how they feel.
- **They may want to talk about their feelings or may want to keep them private.** Respect your loved one's need to share or remain quiet.
- **Allow them to stay as independent as possible.** For example, they may want to do daily tasks by themselves, even if it takes longer. Let them decide when to ask for help.



How do I care for myself while being a caregiver?

Taking care of yourself is just as important as caring for your loved one.

Here are ways you can lower stress, stay healthy, and keep your strength:

- **Take a break.** Ask a friend or family member to take over caregiving duties for a while, or use a respite care program in your area. Respite care programs provide a professional caregiver to give a caregiver a short break.



Find respite providers and programs at archrespite.org/respitelocator

- **Remember that you are doing your best.** It's normal to feel guilty sometimes, but know that no one is a "perfect" caregiver, and that's ok.
- **Take care of your health:**
 - **Try to get enough sleep** - 7 hours each night
 - **Eat a healthy diet** – visit myplate.gov to learn how to create healthy meals
 - **Drink plenty of water** – at least 64 ounces a day
 - **Be active to relieve stress** - take a walk after dinner, stretch, or do other activities you enjoy
- **If you are having severe anxiety, depression, or feel constantly overwhelmed,** talk to your doctor about getting help for your mental health



Learn more

The American Cancer Society offers free resources for caregivers.

Visit cancer.org and click on "Treatment & Support" and select "For Caregivers & Family" to find:

- Caregiver support video series
- Interactive caregiver resource guide, which you can also download as a PDF to print

Call your local American Cancer Society office at **1-800-227-2345**

To schedule a visit at Robert E. Hardy Cancer Center, call 615-341-4383



Nashville General Hospital

