



*Caregivers  
Guide*

*Caregivers  
Guide*



## CAREGIVER ROLES:

There are many different ways to help someone with Cancer—and it takes a team. Besides hospitals, doctors, nurses, technicians, pharmacists, dieticians, social workers, home health agencies, counsellors, clergy, palliative-care specialists, and support groups, it's good to get help from family, friends, and neighbours. Building this team can be a challenge in itself.

To get help from others, give them simple, concrete tasks. Be prepared with a list of ways people can help, and let them choose what they do best. And don't be afraid to ask more than once. Below are some ways to give care.

## MEDICAL:

Cancer is a complex disease, and patients may need help with medical issues. Ask your loved one what he/she'd like you to do. Here are some ways to support his/her treatment:

- Follow his/her wishes and decisions
- Learn about his/her diagnosis and treatment
- Help find and set up his/her medical team
- Research questions, treatment options, and clinical trials
- Help get a second opinion
- Help decide on and support treatment goals
- Keep track of treatment schedule; coordinate with work, family, etc
- Talk with the medical team to make sure patient needs are met

Take notes at doctor's appointments and record medical information, such as blood tests and results. Know who to call with follow-up questions.

- Know about any special instructions, such as diet changes or ways to cope with side effects
- Give medicine and keep track of doses and timing
- Be aware of the patient's pain levels and talk with his/her health care team to help manage them
- Find out about changes—physical, mental, or emotional—that he/she may go through because of treatment
- Understand and track side effects of medicines
- Learn about signs and symptoms that may mean disease progression

## **EMOTIONAL:**

This is a stressful time in your loved one's life. Here are some ways to help him/her cope:

- Support his/her wishes and decisions
- Listen. Often it's the most important thing you can do
- Keep your loved one company. Talk, or just be with her
- Be honest with him/her. Be yourself

## **Help her enjoy her life as fully as possible.**

- Remember that a bad day doesn't have to mean he/she's getting worse
- Appreciate him/her. Notice the small things he/she does - and thank him/her for doing them

## **Be willing to talk with your loved one about hard subjects.**

- Touching, hugging, and other physical contact can help if you both want it
- When you're apart, check in to show you care
- Find out how his/her loved ones are doing
- Help your loved one talk to her health care team about her diagnosis, disease, and treatment

## **PRACTICAL:**

People with Cancer are often very tired - it's one of the most common side effects of treatment. Here are some practical ways to help:

- Support his/her wishes and decisions
- Help with any personal-care needs, such as eating, washing, dressing, etc
- Assist with cleaning, cooking, child care, laundry, errands, etc
- Provide transportation
- Manage insurance, bills, finances, etc
- Keep track of important papers. It's a good idea to start a folder where all his/her papers can be placed
- Help patient maintain as normal a life as he/she desires

## **TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF:**

If you're caring for someone with Cancer, you may tend to put your own needs aside. But the most important thing you can do for your loved one is to take care of yourself. Taking care of your own health will give you the strength to help others.

## **HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF:**

- Eating healthy meals will keep up your strength and improve your mood
- Walking, swimming, and even stretching can help you stay healthy and relieve stress
- Getting enough sleep can be tough. Try to make time to unwind before bed. Naps can help you catch up, but talk to your doctor if sleep problems persist
- Make sure you keep up with your own check-ups, medicines, and other medical needs
- Take time to connect with friends and family

**Take breaks - even a few minutes a day can make a big difference. If you need more time, consider asking others for help. Support can come from family, friends, neighbours, hospitals, government agencies, non-profit groups, or your faith community.**

- Pleasant surroundings can be soothing for both you and your loved one
- Treat yourself. Do something you enjoy

Respect your feelings. Your mind and body can give you important guidance. Exhaustion, irritability, or forgetfulness may be a sign that it's time for some help. In many ways, living with Cancer is like being in a war—and post-traumatic stress disorder may be an issue