

Cancer can mean many changes at home, including new roles as you assist your loved one. Sometimes, this can mean helping your loved one in new ways with their physical or medical needs. This can be stressful at times, especially if you have not had training or experience. Talk to your loved one's health care team about expectations and how you can prepare. You don't have to know how to do everything all at once.

It is important to make sure that you and your loved one are safe at home. Sometimes, providing physical care to a patient can feel overwhelming. Caregivers might feel anxious about assisting with medical devices or medications. Others might have concerns about helping with basic needs, including bathing, eating, or using the toilet.

Your medical team, including social workers and navigators, can be great resources. Talk to them about strategies and in-home support you may be eligible for. The in-home support help you with managing physical care and support options. Consider asking for a referral to occupational therapy for adaptive devices (e.g., shower seat, grab bars) to meet your loved one's needs and keep them safe. Remember that the pharmacist is also a valuable resource if you have questions about medicine. You are not alone. Support systems like the medical team and home health aides can help both patients and caregivers.

You may know the patient better than anyone else. For this reason, you are a crucial part of the health care team. The health care team needs to know how the patient is doing from your point of view.

- Trust your instincts. If you see a change in the patient, speak up.

Caregivers may be taught medical management of small things to help the patient at home. For example, how to assess and medicate for nausea or constipation.

- Ask the health care team to teach you how to support the patient with activities (e.g. eating, bathing). If any new task feels overwhelming, ask for extra guidance.
- If you are confused or overwhelmed, call the health care team.
- Home health nurses can help with more complicated medical tasks like dressing changes.



[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)  
1-888-793-9355



## GET PREPARED FOR MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Sometimes you can join your loved one at medical appointments. Other times you may not be able to join them or they may prefer to go alone. Below is an appointment checklist that you can use and/or share with your loved one.

- Try to make appointments that work with your schedule and note them in your calendar.
- Confirm with the health care team about what to bring.
- Arrange transportation before the appointment.
- Take notes or ask to record the conversation with the health care team.
- Write down questions in advance and make sure to ask them.

**Remember that you are human.** Think of this as a marathon, not a sprint, and pace your energy.

- Make time for yourself. Tune into how you're feeling and take time to do what makes you happy.
- Support groups are for you and the patient. Ask the health care team about local support groups.
- Caring for a loved one can be challenging and emotional. It can cause feelings of resentment or it may deepen your relationship. Be in touch with your feelings. If you're overwhelmed, ask for help.

# General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

**Cancer Support Community** • 888-793-9355 • [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)

**American Cancer Society** • 800-227-2345 • [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**CancerCare** • 800-813-4673 • [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

**Cancer.net** • 888-651-3038 • [www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net)

**Caregiver Action Network** • 855-227-3640 • [www.caregiveraction.org](http://www.caregiveraction.org)

**Healthcare.gov** • [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)

**Livestrong Foundation** • 866-673-7205 • [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org)

**National Cancer Institute** • 800-422-6237 • [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

**National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine** • 888-644-6226 • [www.nccam.nih.gov](http://www.nccam.nih.gov)

**Patient Advocate Foundation** • 800-532-5274 • [www.patientadvocate.org](http://www.patientadvocate.org)

## Cancer Support Community Resources

**Cancer Support Community's** (CSC) resources and programs are available free of charge. Call 888-793-9355 or visit [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org) for more info.

**Cancer Support Helpline**® — Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (888-793-9355), available in 200 languages Mon–Fri, 9 am–9 pm ET.

**Open to Options**® — Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling 888-793-9355 or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

**Frankly Speaking About Cancer**® — Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs. [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer).

**Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs** — With the help of 170 locations, CSC and Gilda's Club affiliates provide services free of charge to people touched by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation).

**MyLifeLine** — CSC's private, online community allows patients and caregivers to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Sign up at [www.MyLifeLine.org](http://www.MyLifeLine.org).

**Grassroots Network** — Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate).

**Cancer Experience Registry**® — Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at [www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org](http://www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org).

The Cancer Support Community provides this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.

© October 2020. Cancer Support Community. All rights reserved.