



CANCERcare®

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fact sheet

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

If you are helping to care for a loved one with cancer, you are a “caregiver.” Caregivers provide important emotional and practical support to a person with cancer. Demands on caregivers have increased in recent years, as more care is being done in the home rather than at a hospital or treatment center.

Caregivers may be tasked with managing and administering treatment, helping their loved one cope with emotional concerns and taking on practical tasks including running errands, pitching in with household chores, preparing meals and helping with child care.

To be the best caregiver for your loved one, seek support and information from others. Caregivers who receive help report feeling less isolated, anxious and depressed. And, having a community of support can free up their time and help them maintain their physical and emotional well-being, which in turn makes them better able to care for their loved one.

GETTING HELP WITH CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES

As a caregiver, it is important to know and accept your own limits. Some caregivers may think that asking for help takes support away from the patient, or that by asking for help, they will be a burden to friends and loved ones. As a result, many stay quiet. And when caregivers stay quiet, they can get burned out, develop health problems and become less able to provide care. Decide which caregiving tasks you will do on your own, and which you will need help with.

Here are some things you can do that will help you as a caregiver:

Learn about respite care programs. Respite care gives family and friends a break from caregiving. While you run errands or take some personal time, respite caregivers spend time with your loved one temporarily. Ask for a referral from a health care professional, friend or local service agency.

Know your rights. If you work for a company with 50 or more employees and have worked there for at least one

year, you may be allowed unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to provide care for your loved one. Ask your human resources department for help and to find out whether this law applies to your company.

Reach out to family and friends.

Are there any family members, friends, members of your faith community, co-workers, neighbors or others you can ask for assistance? Often people want to help, but don't know how. Be specific about the kind of help you need, and keep records of who is handling which task. Helpful websites, such as **My Cancer Circle™** (www.mycancercircle.net), can make it easier by providing calendars and other helpful tools for coordinating care.

MY CANCER CIRCLE

My Cancer Circle is a free online tool that allows caregivers to create a private, secure community that brings together a network of support, including family and friends

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who want to lend a hand with responsibilities. Caregivers start by creating a Community Page and inviting to join only those people they want to be a part of their network.

By setting up the calendar feature, friends and family members can designate time to volunteer based on the needs described by the caregivers. This may include things such as transportation, meals, child care or other practical needs. In order to help volunteers stay on top of their role and remember the tasks they've signed up for, the site sends them an email to remind them of upcoming commitments.

Caregivers also have the option to add personal messages, treatment updates, photos and videos to keep their community of support in the loop. The website offers a helpful video tutorial to answer questions and show you more about the features offered. Visit www.mycancercircle.net to get started.

MORE ONLINE SUPPORT TOOLS

In addition to My Cancer Circle, there are other online resources that can help caregivers and patients access information, sort practical needs and organize a community of support. **MyLifeLine.org** (www.mylifeline.org) allows members to create a free website to keep track of appointments, find information and post requests for help. **CaringBridge** (www.caringbridge.org) helps you create a free web page to provide updates in a patient care journal, share pictures and invite visitors to write messages in a guestbook. Visitors can also learn more about the diagnosis affecting their loved one.



CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers.

To learn more, visit www.cancercare.org or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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