

INFORMATION FOR THE CAREGIVER



THERE ARE ONLY FOUR KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD

THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CAREGIVERS

THOSE WHO ARE CURRENTLY CAREGIVERS

THOSE WHO WILL BE CAREGIVERS

AND THOSE WHO WILL NEED CAREGIVERS.



ROSALYN CARTER
FORMER FIRST LADY

If you are helping a family member or friend through cancer treatment, you are a caregiver and play a key role in the patient's care. Your reliable support is very important to the physical and emotional well-being of the cancer patient. As a caregiver, you can also have a significant influence on how the patient copes with their illness and sticks with an often-difficult treatment plan. As you care for a loved one with cancer, you may wear many hats. According to the American Cancer Society, your role as a caregiver may include:

Home Health Aide and Companion

taking care of a patient's basic needs such as feeding, dressing, bathing and housekeeping.

Personal Assistant arranging appointments and schedules, keeping notes, managing insurance, providing transportation and managing finances.

Problem Solver helping patients deal with the many challenges they may confront during their journey.

Cancer Care Team Member working closely with the medical team and other family members doing important things like giving medications, managing side effects, reporting problems, keeping family members informed and helping determine if a treatment is working.

Perhaps the most important role of a caregiver is to involve the patient as much as possible and be a **Good Communicator**. Help the patient know that they are doing their part to get better. Some tips to keep the patient involved:

- Help them live as normal life as possible.
- Encourage them to share feelings and support their efforts to share.
- Let them know you are available when needed, but don't press issues.
- Take cues from them and remember that people communicate in different ways.
- Be realistic and flexible about what you hope to talk about and agree on.
- Respect the need to be alone. Sometimes we all need time alone—not only the cancer patient but even you as caregiver.

Remember to Take Care of Yourself Too

It is difficult to plan for a major health problem like cancer and if you are the caregiver, suddenly you are asked to care for a loved one with cancer. Many caregivers report spending 32 hours or more per week providing care—in addition to their other life responsibilities—causing stress and distress for cancer caregivers. And while focus tends to be on the patient, all of this will affect a caregiver's physical and mental health too.

As a caregiver, a good place to start is by setting limits on what you can expect from yourself. Caring for someone with cancer can be an overwhelming job. It is good to ask for help before stress builds up. By taking care of yourself, you will be better able to take care of your loved one.

The National Cancer Institute provides some suggestions on ways to take care of yourself and your own needs and feelings as you care for a loved one with cancer:

- Take a break or time for yourself. Respite care (short-term relief) for caregivers may provide much-needed rest or a break. Find time to relax. Do not neglect your personal life and keep up your routine as much as possible.
- Know your limitations—don't try to do it all yourself. Ask others to help. Many caregivers say that, looking back, they wish they had asked for help from friends and family sooner. It is important to let people know what you need and ask for help.
- Find support for yourself. This may come from friends or other family members or from many kinds of support programs.
- Understand your feelings. Give yourself an outlet for your own thoughts and feelings. It may be helpful to talk with others about what you are going through—things you can't say to your loved one with cancer. Try to find someone you can really open up to about your feelings or fears.
- Keep a journal. Research shows that writing or journaling can help relieve stress and negative thoughts and feelings.
- Look for the positive and be thankful. Caregiving is not easy nor stress free but finding meaning in caregiving can make it easier to manage.



CAREGIVER SUPPORT RESOURCES

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org/treatment/caregivers

National Cancer Institute

www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/caregiver-support

CancerCare

www.cancercare.org/tagged/caregiving

CancerCare

www.cancercare.org/publications/1-caregiving_for_your_loved_one_with_cancer

Cancer Support Community

www.cancersupportcommunity.org/living-cancer-topics/caregivers

Livestrong

www.livestrong.org/we-can-help/caregiver-support

Family Caregiver Alliance

www.caregiver.org

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship

www.canceradvocacy.org/resources/cancer-survival-toolbox/special-topics/caring-for-the-caregiver/

About the Jonathan Zierdt Cancer Fund

In 2017, the Jonathan Zierdt Cancer Fund (JZCF) was established in Mankato, MN with a mission to build community cancer awareness and support. In January 2018, JZCF launched the JZ Caring Box program and has supplied nearly 2,000 specially designed care packages to area cancer patients since that time. In October 2019, the JZCF expanded the JZ Caring Box program to Fairmont, MN to support cancer patients, their families and caregivers in that region.



INSPIRATION

"The closest thing to being cared for is to care for someone else."

- Carson McCullers, author

"It is not how much you do, but how much love you put in the doing."

- Mother Teresa, missionary

"And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world it is best to hold hands and stick together."

- Robert Fulghum, author

"Being deeply loved by someone gives you strength, while loving someone deeply gives you courage."

- Laozi, philosopher

"Caregiving often calls us to lean into love we didn't know possible."

- Tia Walker, author

"You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the things which you think you cannot do."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

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