

# TIPS FOR CANCER CAREGIVERS

CAREGIVERS



Tips for Cancer Caregivers

## Helpful Information for Caregivers of Seniors with Cancer

Caregiving for a senior with cancer comes with many challenges. Seniors with cancer often experience longer recoveries. Here's what caregivers need to know to help.

It's estimated that 39% of people will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. Many individuals living with cancer are over the age of 65. ([Cancer.gov](http://Cancer.gov))

Many seniors face challenges as they age, particularly health problems. For some, cancer further complicates their care. Caregivers offering support to seniors with cancer must be aware of the unique challenges their seniors face.



### Maintain Your Health as You Give Care

The National Center for Biotechnical Information ([NCBI](http://NCBI)) finds that 67% of family caregivers of seniors with cancer experience depression. Caregiver burnout, sleep trouble, and other unhealthy issues tend to affect those who take care of elderly cancer patients.

#### Take care of yourself by:

- Sharing your struggles with loved ones
- Receiving counseling
- Participating in a support group
- Sharing the burden of care with others
- Taking time away to rest
- Attending your own medical appointments
- Enjoying activities that bring you joy
- Eating healthily and exercising

## Cancer Recovery Challenges for the Elderly

- Treating cancer poses a medical dilemma. For cancer cells to be eliminated, the body is exposed to toxins in chemotherapy or damage by radiation.
- Cancer treatment is a delicate balance between under and over treating. For frail seniors, treatment can be more harmful than cancer itself.
- Cancer patients' bodies have to recover not only from the effects of cancer but also from the side effects of treatment.
- Elderly cancer patients may naturally have weakened immune systems that make recovery more difficult.
- Recovery from cancer may be negatively impacted by other illnesses common among seniors, like diabetes or heart disease.
- Seniors with cancer can typically expect to have a longer recovery period with more risks, side effects, monitoring, and medications than younger patients.



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## 6 Tips for Caregiving for Seniors with Cancer

1

### LEARN ABOUT THE TREATMENT PLAN

Whether or not you are privy to the medical information of a senior with cancer, you can learn about their treatment plan. Find out how often treatments are scheduled and the common side effects of treatment. This will help you plan caregiving activities appropriately.

2

### UNDERSTAND WHAT IS AND ISN'T COMMON

Cancer can result in symptoms such as hair loss, nausea, and memory problems. It is important for caregivers to know about common side effects of cancer and its treatment. When uncommon symptoms are noticed, a caregiver needs to know who to call and at what point emergency assistance should be sought.

3

### ANTICIPATE TREATMENT SIDE EFFECTS

Since there are so many common side effects of cancer treatment, caregivers can often anticipate resulting needs. For example, the fatigue typical of cancer patients will likely lower seniors' energy level. Prepare to offer mobility assistance and limit planned activities to accommodate for the extra rest times you can expect.

4

### BE A SUPPORTIVE LISTENER

Individuals respond to cancer diagnoses, prognoses, and treatments differently. While encouragement is beneficial, it's often more valuable for caregivers to listen supportively. Compassionate care helps seniors to enjoy a high quality of life even with cancer's effects.

5

### DO NOT OVERLOOK OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Many seniors with cancer also face other medical challenges, like arthritis or heart disease. Pay attention to the needs other medical conditions create. Learn what you can about how other illnesses and cancer may influence each other and impact your senior.

6

### COLLABORATE WITH OTHER CAREGIVERS

Seniors with cancer often require 24-hour care and extensive assistance. Work together with family members and other caregivers to keep track of side effects, appointments, and medication administration.

([Cancer.gov](http://Cancer.gov), [Cancer.org](http://Cancer.org), [Cancer Care](http://Cancer Care))



### Home Care Tip:

Cancer treatment can involve tracking symptoms, medications, and a variety of appointments. Take the time to organize your monitoring efforts in a planner that you, your senior, and other caregivers share.