



CANCERcare®

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# Managing the Practical Concerns of Your Loved One's Diagnosis

A cancer diagnosis raises many practical concerns and challenges. There are appointments to keep and bills to pay, as well as paperwork to manage. As a caregiver, it likely falls on you to manage many of these tasks – in addition to keeping up with your usual responsibilities and filling in for some of the roles that used to be handled by your loved one.

## Here are some tips for managing the various practical issues related to your loved one's cancer:

**Use a calendar.** There are many ways to keep track of appointments, including a portable planner or organizer, the calendar function on your cell phone, online calendars, or a simple wall calendar. Whichever method you like is fine – the important thing is to use it consistently. Write down any appointments or events as soon as you know about them, and always check the calendar before you make plans.



**Keep important papers together in an accessible file.** Keeping your loved one's medical information in one place, such as a three-ring binder, makes it easy to find what you need quickly and easily, as well as to carry everything with you to appointments. Organize the information in the way that works best for you. For example, you might have different dividers for prescription information, important phone numbers, lab tests, or medical bills.

**Familiarize yourself with your loved one's insurance policy.** Understand ahead of time what services are covered and what the copayments will be for the various treatments your loved one may need. Most insurance companies will assign a case manager who can explain what services and treatments the plan does and doesn't cover, and answer any questions you may have.

**Get to know your entitlements and work benefits.** There are a number of federal and state programs that provide financial benefits to individuals and families, such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. A social worker can direct you to the governmental agencies that oversee these programs. The human resources department at you or your loved one's job can provide information on the Family Medical Leave Act, which allows a person with cancer and his or her family members to take job-protected leave, as well as how to apply for disability or sick leave.

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**Apply for financial help.** There are many programs that help those who qualify to get medications for free or at a low cost. For more information, contact the Partnership for Prescription Assistance ([www.pparx.org](http://www.pparx.org)). There are also a number of local and national programs that provide other types of financial assistance, such as help with transportation, medical supplies, utilities, housing/lodging, and scholarships. Visit the website of the Cancer Financial Assistance Coalition ([www.cancerfac.org](http://www.cancerfac.org)) to search by cancer diagnosis or type of assistance.



**Speak with an oncology social worker.** Oncology social workers, such as those at CancerCare, specialize in helping people cope with cancer. They can provide emotional support and help you develop a plan for dealing with practical challenges. They are also familiar with a wide range of resources for people with cancer and can provide you with referrals tailored to your needs.

**Ask for help from friends and family members.** The stress of caregiving can take a toll on the emotional and physical health of caregivers. Having friends and family members help with day-to-day tasks such as grocery shopping, doing laundry, preparing meals, or providing child care, can help prevent caregiver burnout. A free online service, [www.MyCancerCircle.net](http://www.MyCancerCircle.net), helps you coordinate friends and family to help you manage your caregiving tasks.

**Join a support group for caregivers.** Other cancer caregivers can provide a wealth of information about how they have coped with similar challenges and resources or organizations they have found especially helpful. In addition, support groups provide a safe haven to express your feelings and share your experiences. CancerCare provide free support groups for people affected by cancer and their caregivers.

### About CancerCare

CancerCare is a national nonprofit organization that helps people better cope with the emotional and practical challenges arising from a cancer diagnosis. CancerCare's free services include individual counseling, support groups, educational workshops, publications and financial help.

### About MyCancerCircle.net

CancerCare, in collaboration with Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc. is proud to announce MyCancerCircle.net, a free, private, online community of support for families and caregivers of people facing cancer. Visit [www.MyCancerCircle.net](http://www.MyCancerCircle.net) for more information and to create your own community of support.

To learn more about how CancerCare helps, call us at **800-813-HOPE (4673)** or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

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