

Providing Care

Providing care (caregiving) is not limited to helping with daily activities such as visiting the doctor, preparing food, and taking care of household chores. It is also about learning new knowledge, as well as talking and listening to your loved one to help him/her to cope and work through the many mixed feelings that surface during this difficult period. While caregiving may be new and seem difficult to you now, you can learn more as you walk together with your loved one through his/her cancer experience. Try to give yourself time to understand and work through the changes that had taken place. Most caregivers are able to acquire the new skills with time and practice.



Some of the new knowledge or skills that you may have to learn include:

- Your loved one's cancer type and its treatment
- Talking to the medical team
(Refer to document on talking to the medical team)
- Managing medications
- Managing the side effects of cancer and its treatment
- Helping your loved one to move around
- Helping your loved one with showering, toileting or changing
- Sorting out logistics and finances

What you can do

While everyone copes differently, here are some practical tips that you may find useful:

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<p><i>Managing medications</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Place medicines, medical supplies and equipment you may need in <u>one</u> place, so that it is easier to locate them• Keep a list of all medications your loved one is taking, including those that are bought over the counter (e.g. herbs, supplements). Record the medication names, doses, how often they are taken, effects and side effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid starting medications (including supplements) for your loved one without consulting the doctor, especially if he/she is receiving any anti-cancer treatment. This is to prevent harmful drug interactions

- Carry the medication list with you, especially during medical appointments

Managing side effects of cancer and its treatment

- Learn what symptoms your loved one may have from his/her cancer and its treatment, and how to manage them. You may do so by asking the doctor or nurse, or reading our online resources at <https://www.nccs.com.sg/patient-care/Pages/Coping-with-Cancer-and-treatments.aspx>
- Know who to call for medical problems or concerns. Save important phone numbers in your mobile phone, or place the list near your phone where it can be easily seen

Managing activities of daily living

- Tell the doctor or nurse if you have any concerns about providing care. Do not hesitate to ask them to show you what to do, for things that you are unsure about. Ask for written information that you can use as a guide
- Make your home environment safe. You can do this by:
 - Arranging the furniture so that there is enough space to walk
 - Placing non-slip mats on the shower floor
 - Installing handrails or grab bars in the toilet and bathroom for extra security
- Don't attempt to do everything for your loved one. It is important for them to do as much of their own care as possible, so that they can stay active and prevent muscle wasting
- Avoid placing loose rugs or objects on the floor, to prevent tripping

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Placing a stool in the bathroom for your loved one to sit on while showering ▪ Using a wheelchair or commode with lift-off arms to transfer your loved one more easily ▪ Installing an elevated toilet to make it easier for your loved one to sit down and stand up 	
<p><i>Talking to someone with cancer</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer to listen whenever your loved one wants to talk about his /her condition or concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't judge or try to change the way your loved one feels or acts. Listen and try to understand how they feel

When to call your cancer care team

Please inform your doctor or nurse if you feel overwhelmed or if you do not think you can manage your loved one's care at home. If you are a patient with NCCS, you may also call **+65 6436 8417** or **+65 64368088** to book an appointment to speak to an NCCS medical social worker, to explore more about caregiving options.

If you have any questions regarding the above information, please call Cancer Helpline at **+65 6225 5655** or approach your doctor or nurse for further details. You may also visit AICarelink office at Singapore General Hospital (next to Kopitiam) for more information on caregiving services such as home nursing, home personal care, day care, and medical escort.

Useful resources

You may consider visiting the following websites for more information on caregiving.

Local resources:

- Agency for Integrated Care
<https://www.aic.sg/>
- Silver Pages – Caregiving
<https://www.silverpages.sg/caregiving>
- Singapore Hospice Council: Caregiver Resources
<https://singaporehospice.org.sg/caregiver/>

Other resources:

- American Cancer Society: Caregivers and family
<https://www.cancer.org/treatment/caregivers.html>
- Caregiver support
<http://www.caregiversupport.org>
- Helpguide: Caregiving
<https://www.helpguide.org/home-pages/caregiving.htm>
- Help for Cancer Caregivers
<https://www.helpforcancercaregivers.org/>

The above contents are made available as part of TEMASEK FOUNDATION-ACCESS (Accessible Cancer Care to Enable Support for Survivors) PROGRAMME, a holistic care programme to support cancer patients during their care and recovery journey.

The contents have been approved by the Cancer Education Information Service, National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS), for people with cancer and their families and caregivers. However, this information serves only as a guide and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis, treatment or advice. For specific medical conditions, please seek expert medical advice from your healthcare team.

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