

Caregiving

A Guide to Understanding the Essential Role You Play as a Caregiver.

What is Caregiving?

"There are only four kinds of people in this world: those who have been caregivers, those who currently are caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers."

Rosalyn Carter
FORMER FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES

What does it mean to be a caregiver? This answer will look different depending on who you ask, but basically, caregivers assist and support patients as they navigate an illness. Caregivers play an essential role in a patient's health and wellness.

Being a caregiver is challenging. Caregivers are not only responsible for the well-being of the patient, but they also manage their own lives. Caregivers must also keep themselves emotionally, physically, and spiritually healthy.

It may be easier said than done, but don't forget to take care of yourself if you're caregiving.

3 Questions for Your Doctor

- 1** What side effects should I be on the lookout for, and when do they require medical attention?
- 2** Who do I contact in case I have medical questions, or if there is an emergency?
- 3** Are you familiar with any support services that I might find useful as a caregiver?

"Remember that you are not alone. Please, don't be afraid to ask for help. Don't try to be Superman. We all want to try our best for the ones we love, but if we are exhausted, we are not able to help anyone. Get your rest, maintain your mental health, and always just live in the moment. You'll be happy you did. You're going to want to do so much at one time, but learn to delegate tasks. Have someone you trust handle meals, someone else take on household duties, someone else help with kids or even pets. This will free up time so you can do your research. Use resources like Fight CRC to help you. Find everything from clinical trials to others to connect with who are fighting the same battle. God bless you all."

Jonathan Ortiz, Sr.
CAREGIVER TO HIS LATE WIFE

Working with doctors you trust is critical. Scan to search for medical professionals who do clinical trials and/or biomarker testing.
[ProviderFinder.FightCRC.org](https://www.providerfinder.fightcancer.org)



A loving caregiver makes a huge difference in a patient's journey.
[FightCRC.org/Caregiving](https://www.fightcancer.org/caregiving)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ChatCRC is Fight CRC's proprietary 24/7 chatbot that provides colorectal cancer resources and support. Start chatting now at chatbot.fightcancer.org or text 318-242-8272.

Our Guide in the Fight Series offers more brochures like this one for colorectal cancer information. To explore the series visit, [FightCRC.org/Guide](https://www.fightcancer.org/guide).

A Resource for Caregivers by Caregivers

Caregiving Realities

Caregivers often face their own struggles like fear, helplessness, and anxiety, and they may struggle with self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy.

Providing care can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience, but it can also be challenging.

According to a poll* of over 1,000 adults who consider themselves long-term caregivers:

- 8 in 10 caregivers pay for costs associated with caregiving out of their own pockets
- 25% have reduced their own retirement savings because of these expenses
- 25% say they have difficulties managing their own health due to being a caregiver
- Nearly 75% of caregivers over the age of 40 report feelings of loneliness
- 63% cope with difficult caregiving situations through prayer or meditation; 44% sleep less, and 17% drink more alcohol

Being a caregiver is stressful work that may sometimes feel thankless. However, caregiving is an essential service, and there are resources and support available.

REMEMBER TO:

- ☐ Accept help when needed. It's ok.
- ☐ Make your own health a priority – attend your doctor's appointments, go to the gym, eat healthy food, get sleep.
- ☐ Maintain your hobbies and make time for them.
- ☐ Don't feel like you need an excuse to take a break.

* <https://apnorc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Long-Term-Caregiving-2018-Report.pdf>

Asking for Help

Reaching out for support does not mean you are inadequate or a failure.

COMMUNICATE

You are not alone! Talk to your friends and family and utilize resources at the clinic or hospital where treatment is being provided.

CHECKLIST

Here are some common ways people step in and support caregivers:

FOOD	HOUSEWORK	CHILDCARE	TRANSPORTATION
------	-----------	-----------	----------------

Food Planning, grocery shopping, meal prepping, and cooking. Keep some simple meal ideas handy for when people ask. Receive the gift of food delivery service (like DoorDash) or meal subscription boxes (like HelloFresh®). Download diet restriction guides so you can quickly share what you and the patient can and cannot eat.

Housework Ask others to help tidy up, do laundry, mow the lawn, etc.

Childcare Accept help if people you trust offer to watch kids, carpool, or drive children to school and practice.

Transportation Need a quick break? Ask family or friends to provide transportation to and from doctor's appointments to give yourself time to decompress and breathe.

Take a moment to think about what YOU need and how others can help. There is no shame in asking for support.

How to Give Care

Many people are not experienced caregivers. Providing care looks different for everyone. Effectively caring for someone will help both you and the patient navigate the process more comfortably and provide higher quality care.

UNDERSTAND AND EXPECT SIDE EFFECTS

No treatment comes without side effects. Don't let unexpected side effects catch you off-guard. Talk to the doctor about what side effects you can expect to see, how to best manage them, and when to seek medical attention.

Utilize the patient's care team to educate yourself and be prepared.

Understanding "normal" side effects and what to do if they become severe can help alleviate anxiety and stress.

CREATE A CHECKLIST

Be prepared when someone asks, "How can I help?" Create and maintain a checklist of tasks or chores that can be readily done by someone else.

Remember: Accepting help will make you a better caregiver.

HOUSEHOLD LOGISTICS

When are the bills due, and who pays them? Are they paid via check or online bill pay? When is trash day? Also: Get login information, passwords, due dates, account numbers, and other administrative information. Don't forget online patient portals.

Obtaining this information before it is needed can help reduce or prevent last-minute panic and avoid disruptions in essential services.

SUPPORT YOUR PATIENT

Your role is to support and help your loved one. Remember: The patient is in the driver's seat in regard to their care decisions, and you are in the passenger's seat.

Join appointments if they'd like company and come prepared with questions. Take notes and be ready to discuss symptoms you've noticed. Advocate for your patient when they may not feel comfortable pushing back or making requests. Ask your loved one how you can best support them in their treatment and go from there.

SUPPORT YOURSELF

Recognize your social and emotional needs. You may need to talk with someone, vent, or sit in shared silence for a while. Take advantage of opportunities to spend time with friends and make time for yourself. Consider therapy to help you process the trauma of cancer as a caregiver.

RECOGNIZE BURNOUT

Caregiving is a full-time job, and you likely have other responsibilities. If you're feeling like everything has become "too much," take a break. Recognize that you are not the only one who can help, and reach out for your own support before you completely burn out. Doing so will actually improve the quality of your care.

We stress the necessity of asking for help before reaching burnout, but why do people often have trouble reaching out? Research indicates that caregivers may not recognize themselves as caregivers, and that the added work of being a caregiver slowly but surely changes your sense of self. Recognizing your new role as a caregiver early on may help you realize when your workload is becoming too much to handle and might encourage you to reach out for help sooner, rather than later.

A loving caregiver makes a huge difference in a patient's journey.

This brochure is educational and not medical advice. Talk with your care team about your specific situation.

All content was written, edited, and approved by Fight Colorectal Cancer and its subject matter experts.

FCRC-0007A-0325 · ©2025 FIGHTCRC · 703.548.1225 · [FIGHTCRC.ORG](https://fightcrc.org)

A Resource for Caregivers by Caregivers