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http://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/caring-loved-one/exploring-new-caregiver-options

# Exploring New Caregiver Options [1]

**This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [2], 04/2015**

## Key Messages:

- Caring for a person with cancer involves many tasks, and many caregivers often need support.
- There are many options that caregivers can consider for help with both medical and non-medical caregiving tasks.

Providing care to a person with cancer is often an enormous responsibility. It is common for caregivers to discover that they cannot handle all of the tasks on their own. If you feel like you have too much to cope with, consider exploring other caregiving options. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. By seeking assistance, you can help both the person you care for and yourself. The person you care for continues to receive effective care. And, you have time to take care of your own health and well-being.

## Professional caregiving resources

Consider hiring medical or non-medical professionals who can help you provide high-quality care and/or help you manage various other responsibilities.

**Medical professionals.** These professionals typically help with medical responsibilities that families are not able to perform or are not comfortable performing.

Registered oncology nurses [3] can provide wound care, give chemotherapy, help with nutrition concerns [4], and manage pain [5]. Home health care aides can handle less complex medical issues, such as checking a patient's temperature and blood pressure.

Physical therapists [6] and occupational therapists can also provide assistance with rehabilitation [7]. Physical therapists treat conditions or injuries that affect a person's ability to move around. Occupational therapists teach people ways to do daily tasks that are more difficult after an illness or injury.

**Non-medical professionals.** Home care aides help with everyday caregiving tasks, such as bathing, grooming, cooking, cleaning, and errands. Home care aides may also be called companions or personal attendants. Talk with the patient's health insurance company about whether it covers any of these services. And, take some time to explore all home health care options [8].

## Community resources

Beyond medical and physical care, many communities have a wide range of resources available to caregivers, including:

**Case management.** Some organizations have trained case managers that help coordinate home care, transportation, and meals. Some case management services may be free for some patients.

**Legal aid.** Local legal organizations may provide assistance with legal issues, such as advance directives [9]. An advance directive is a legally binding set of instructions that explains the medical treatment preferences that the person with cancer would want upheld if he or she became unable to make the decisions.

**Financial assistance and counseling.** Local agencies may be able to help you and the person with cancer manage financial issues related to cancer treatment. Find financial resources [10].

**Food delivery**. Some for-profit and nonprofit organizations deliver healthy meals directly to a person's home. Talk with a social worker for more information.

## Friends and family

Make a list of people within the patient's personal support system who could best help with specific caregiving tasks. This list could include emergency contacts, close friends and relatives, neighbors, and members of a religious community. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Many people want to help provide care but aren't sure you want or need help. That's why it's important to specify the type of help you need. You can do this when someone asks to help when you are delegating responsibilities [11].

## Hospice services

Hospice care [12] offers physical, emotional, social, and spiritual support for people living with advanced cancer and their families. A patient can receive this type of care at home or in a hospital. Hospice care is also available at an inpatient hospice facility, a nursing home, or other

long-term care facilities.

## Referrals

You can get referrals to agencies and community resources from the patient's doctor, oncology social worker, or nurse. You can also learn more from members of local or online support groups or state or county health agencies.

## More Information

How Caregivers Can Take Care of Themselves [13]

The Cancer Legal Resource Center: Helping People Navigate Cancer-Related Legal Issues [14]

## Additional Resource

Family Caregiver Alliance: Community Care Options [15]

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**Links**
[1] http://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/caring-loved-one/exploring-new-caregiver-options
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/31036
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/24985
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/24585
[6] http://www.cancer.net/node/31866
[7] http://www.cancer.net/node/25397
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[14] http://www.cancer.net/node/24700
[15] https://caregiver.org/community-care-options