

[Home](#) > [Coping With Cancer](#) > [Caring for a Loved One](#) > Long-Distance Caregiving

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<http://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/caring-loved-one/long-distance-caregiving>

[Long-Distance Caregiving](#) [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 who lives far away presents unique challenges.
- Not being physically with the person you care for may make logistics more difficult and intensify caregiving concerns.
- There are ways to be an effective caregiver, even when you live farther away.

The following suggestions can help work with and around many of the challenges of long-distance caregiving.

Get organized. Collect and sort information about the medical, financial, and legal needs of the person with cancer. This will help you make informed decisions, if that is your caregiving role, or help others make informed decisions. Some people use a binder or file folder to keep track of everything.

Make sure that the correct legal documents, such as [advance directives](#) [3], are completed and given to those who need them. This will allow you to make medical, or financial, decisions if the person with cancer is unable to. Find more information about [managing the cost of cancer care](#) [4] and [managing someone's cancer care](#) [5].

Introduce yourself. Call the health care team members involved in the care of the person, if possible. It is important to let them know that you play a key role in providing care. Give them your phone number(s) and other contact information in case they need to reach you. You may need to sign a release or have the person with cancer's permission to discuss medical conditions and treatments.

Explore professional services. Contact the person's health care team, [social worker](#) [6], state or local health department for referrals for reliable [home care services](#) [7]. Home care services can range from providing basic medical care to assisting with household tasks, meals, and personal care. Talk with the person's insurance company about which, if any, home care services the company covers.

Recruit and organize volunteers. Contact family, neighbors, friends, and members of religious, civic, and social organizations who may want to help with caregiving tasks. There are [resources on the Internet](#) [8] where you can list specific tasks the person with cancer needs help with. Through these sites, your family and friends can volunteer and coordinate tasks. This is also an easy way to keep a large group of people updated.

Prepare for unplanned travel. Be prepared to travel if the person with cancer needs your help. You can prepare for unplanned travel in several ways. Try setting aside vacation or sick days from work and researching travel options. Enlist a friend's or neighbor's help to pick up mail, water plants, or care for your home in case you need to leave suddenly. You can also arrange for someone to help care for your own family while you are away.

Provide and seek emotional support. Reach out through regular phone calls, letters, and e-mails, to reassure the person with cancer of your continued support.

Many long-distance caregivers feel guilty about living far away from the person with cancer. Or they may feel overwhelmed by the challenges of coordinating care from afar. Seek out [support for yourself](#) [9] from family, friends, or a [counselor](#) [10] to help deal with stress and emotional struggles.

Making the most of visits

When visiting the person you care for, plan ahead and use the time wisely. The following suggestions can help you make the most of a visit:

Meet with a member of the medical team. Set up an appointment with the person's health care team to discuss the medical issues and care plan. Before the trip, prepare a list of questions for the health care team. It is important to include the person with cancer in the discussions, if possible.

Meet with the person's informal support network. Arrange to meet with friends, neighbors, and members of community organizations who are helping provide care. Ask if they have any concerns or suggestions on ways to improve care. Try to keep an open mind about what they say or suggest. Also, ask that they contact you right away if they notice any problems.

Schedule a break for the local caregivers. If possible, plan to take over some of the local caregivers' tasks. This provides local caregivers with some relief. It also gives you the chance to reassess the caregiving needs and resources first hand. Observe the person's condition and the

condition of the surroundings. Is there food in the refrigerator? Is the house clean? Is the person bathed and groomed? Spend time talking to the person with cancer about their feelings regarding the care they are receiving.

Take time to reconnect. Schedule quality time with the person with cancer by participating in activities that you enjoy doing together.

More Information

[Organizing Your Cancer Care](#) [11]

[Young Adults Caring for a Parent With Cancer](#) [12]

[Caregiver Support](#) [13]

Additional Resources

[Family Caregiver Alliance: Handbook for Long-Distance Caregivers](#) [14]

[Caring From a Distance](#) [15]

[National Institute of Aging: So Far Away: Twenty Questions and Answers About Long-Distance Caregiving](#) [16]

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/coping-with-cancer/caring-loved-one/long-distance-caregiving>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25278>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24865>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25015>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/30961>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25030>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24634>

[9] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25031>

[10] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24699>

[11] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25065>

[12] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24746>

[13] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25009>

[14] <https://caregiver.org/handbook-long-distance-caregivers>

[15] <http://www.cfad.org/>

[16]

<http://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/so-far-away-twenty-questions-and-answers-about-long-distance-caregiving>

9