

Considerations for Giving Care to Patients With Cancer

Caregiver Checklist

As a caregiver, you play an important role in the course of the patient's cancer treatment. Caregivers typically help patients with scheduling appointments, monitoring medication side effects, communicating with doctors and nurses, providing transportation, and assisting with financial and legal matters. To help you organize with managing these tasks, this checklist provides information that may assist you in your role as a caregiver.

Caregiving in the Home

- Identify tasks that involve hands-on patient care and those that are routine in nature, and become familiar with the level of effort involved

Hands-on Tasks

- In-home supervision (safety, comfort, companionship)
- Personal hygiene (bathing, skin/hair care, oral hygiene)
- Medical/nursing care (monitoring adherence to oral medication, assisting in-home mobility)
- Recreation (activities with family members and/or friends)

Routine Tasks

- Food preparation (preparing, cooking, serving)
- Managerial assistance (medical appointments, finances, legal matters)
- Transportation (medical appointments, errands, recreation)
- Patient's prior responsibilities (caring of children and pets)
- Housework (laundry, garbage, outdoor maintenance)

- If you need assistance with these tasks, ask the patient or his or her family members about other individuals who could potentially be appropriate helpers

Caregiving at the Doctor's Office or Hospital

- At the start of the medical appointment, consider letting the doctor review the list of questions you and the patient have, so he or she knows which issues are important to you
- If you or the patient feel that you need more information beyond what's discussed at the medical appointment, ask the doctor or nurse to recommend reading material or websites to provide a better understanding
- Refer questions about insurance claims, billing, and other administrative matters to the office's administrative personnel
- Write down contact information for the doctors and nurses who will be part of the patient's care team, including phone numbers, e-mail addresses, office hours, and after-hours contact information

Caregiving to Manage Medications

- When the patient receives the prescription from the doctor, make sure that both you and the patient can read the drug name and dosage, understand what the medication does, and know what to do if there are side effects
- Be sure to tell the doctor of all other medications that the patient is currently taking, including prescribed medications, over-the-counter medications, herbal products, and supplements
- When picking up the prescription, check that the order correctly lists the patient's name and pills at the right dosage
- Maintain a medications log to track if the patient is correctly taking the oral oncology medication as prescribed

Patient Health Care Binder



Assembling a binder or notebook that contains the patient's medical information may help you as the caregiver feel more prepared and in control when it comes to making decisions, preventing medical errors, and having access to accurate information. If you think that this tool may be helpful to you, consider putting together the following information in a health care binder:

Contents	Considerations
Pathology reports, MRIs, PET scans, and CT scans	Ask the doctor for a copy of these reports on CD-ROM or flash drive in case the patient decides to pursue a second opinion or alternative treatments; these reports contain the most important information about the tumor and diagnosis and will direct the treatment options
Lab reports and blood tests	Ask the doctor for a copy of these reports; having copies on hand will allow you and the patient to quickly refer to them if needed
Medications log	Include all current medications being taken, along with their associated dosages, dates, side effects, any problems experienced, and who prescribed them
Treatment log	Include all treatments that the patient has undergone (for example, radiation, surgery, or chemotherapy), along with their associated dates, side effects, any problems experienced, and provider information
Calendar pages	Include medical and treatment appointments, home care, and therapy schedules
Health history	Record important health information, such as the patient's insurance policy number, emergency contact information, history of other serious illnesses, allergic reactions to medications, and other conditions for which the patient is currently being treated
Notes and questions	Use this section to write notes during appointments or maintain a file of questions that you need the doctor to answer

Resources



For more information on caregiver resources, please visit the following:

American Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.org>

CancerCare

<http://www.cancercare.org>

Cancer Support Community

<http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/cancer>

National Cancer Institute

<http://www.cancer.gov>

University of California, San Diego:

<http://cancer.ucsd.edu/coping/resources-education/Pages/caregiver-tips.aspx>

University of California, San Francisco:

http://cancer.ucsf.edu/_docs/crc/Caregiver_GEN.pdf

Reference: University of California, San Francisco, Caregivers Project/Osher Center for Integrative Medicine. Orientation to caregiving – a handbook for family caregivers of patients with serious illness. UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center website. http://cancer.ucsf.edu/_docs/crc/Caregiver_GEN.pdf. Accessed June 25, 2018.

