Article Series Caregivers All

Tips to help you care for your loved one

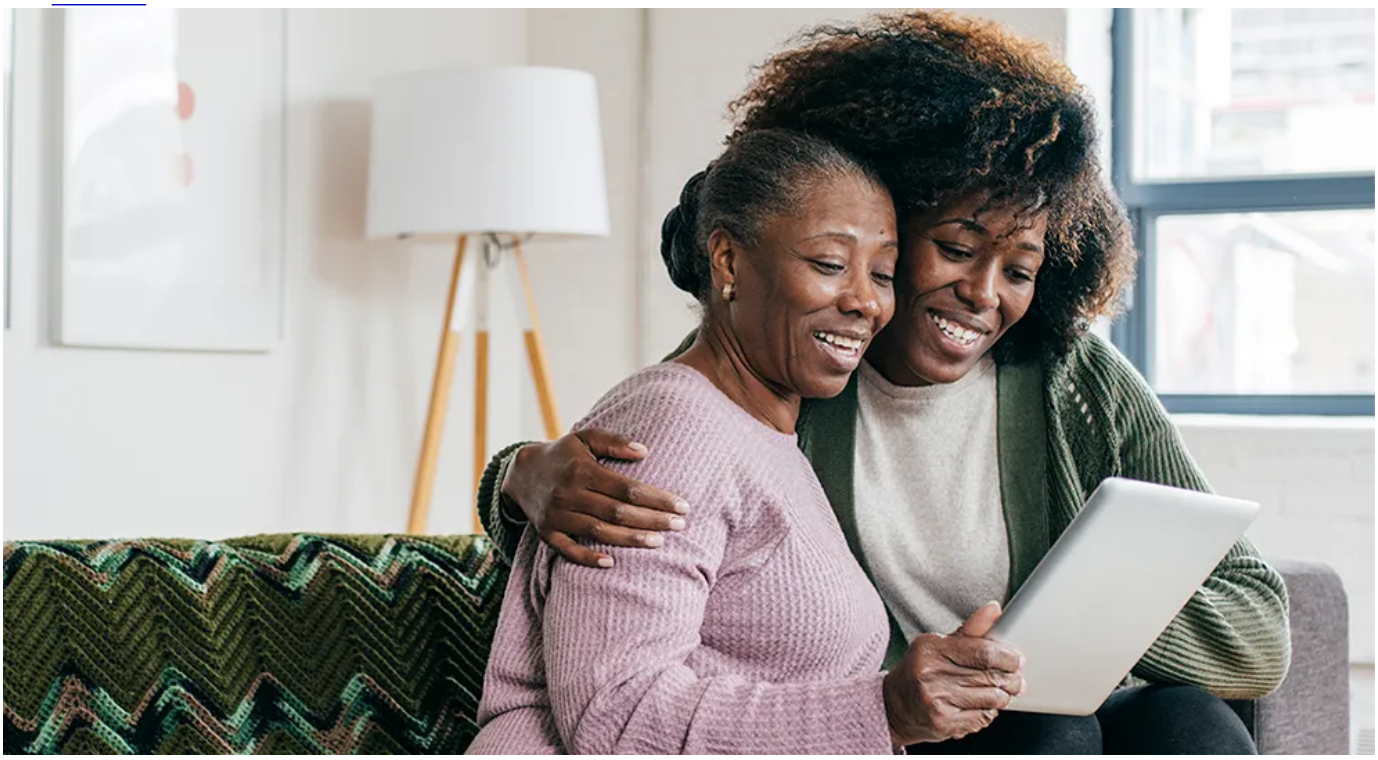
5 min read

Like (2) Likes

Bookmark

Share

Print



All Caregivers

Resize

A A A

Being a caregiver is an important job. As your loved one's #1 advocate, you play an important role in how they cope with and treat their illness. When that person is older, there are often other considerations that impact the decisions you help them make.

What to keep in mind when caring for older adults

Older adults with cancer often have one or more chronic conditions they are dealing with, in addition to cancer, which may result in both physical and emotional limitations. These other conditions can factor into how a doctor makes a decision on

which treatment to recommend, which can have additional effects on the health and well-being of your loved one. It can be difficult to find the right balance between a treatment that works well and a treatment that causes the fewest side effects when you factor in other conditions your loved one may have.

Research has also shown that some older adults with cancer have trouble talking with their medical teams. And lack of a strong support system or trouble understanding treatment plans can make a bad situation worse for these adults. To help work through these challenges, caregivers can use the tips below.

Helpful checklists for caregivers

Checklists can help you make the most of your doctor visit and ensure the best care for your loved one. Take a look at the checklists below to help you with this process:

- **Prepare for the appointment:** Appointments can go by quickly, so it's helpful to bring a notepad or tablet for notetaking. Before you go with a loved one to their next appointment, check out these tips on how to make the most of the visit.
- **Create an emergency plan:** Emergencies can happen, and they're almost always unexpected. Review this list to make sure important information is part of your emergency back-up plan.
- **Make sure your loved one understands their treatment:** It's important your loved one understands and feels comfortable with their treatment. This list of questions is designed to help your loved one understand their healthcare needs.
- **Understand your loved one's mental health:** These may be some of the hardest days of your loved one's life. Help them find joy and face this battle with a more positive mindset. Here are a few suggestions that could help.

Take care of yourself

Being a caregiver comes with its own challenges, and sometimes you might feel like it's too much to handle. You may feel angry, frustrated, alone or sad. But taking care of yourself and your own well-being is one of the most important things you can do for the person you care for. Do your best to remember to:

- **Accept help.** If somebody offers help, take it. Do you have a dog that needs walking or a child that needs to be picked up from school? Think of ways others can help when the offer is made

- **Be realistic.** There's no such thing as a "perfect" caregiver; you are doing the best you can. Focus on what you can provide instead of what you can't.
- **Find social time**. It's important to keep up social connections with other adults. Time with friends can help you recharge and find encouragement. Connecting with a support group or a therapist can help you through tough situations.
- **Maintain your own health**. Set health goals and make an effort to be active most days of the week.
- **Disconnect.** Take a few minutes to simply be alone and to breathe each day. Just a few minutes of quiet time can shift your mood to give you a more positive outlook.

As a caregiver, you are not alone. About 1 out of 3 adults finds themselves taking care of other adults in the United States at some point in their lives. As you navigate the role of a caregiver, consider checking out what support services may be available locally for you or your loved one. Try searching the web for your county's Office of Aging and see if you're eligible for support services.

Despite its challenges, being a caregiver can also be very rewarding. It allows you to positively impact your loved one's life.

Here are some additional resources for more information about being a caregiver and finding support.

Additional resources

LivingWith app: A free app to help manage life with cancer. This app helps to:

- Build a network of support and easily update loved ones
- Track mood and pain, and record sleep and steps
- Send or receive requests for help with tasks
- Remember important information from doctors' visits and stay organized, all in one place
- Build a circle of support

This Is For You: A program for patients and caregivers. This interesting, guided experience will help equip you and your loved one to deal with challenges, so that you can both focus on making the most of everyday moments.

Tips For Helping Your Loved One: Three key tips on ways you can help your loved one during cancer treatment.

Caring Communication Tips: Four helpful tips on how to find the right words when talking to a loved one who is living with cancer.

National Cancer Institute Support Resources: Tools and resources that can help caregivers care for their loved one and themselves.