

For Parents: Managing Cancer Treatment for Your Child



The healthcare system can be hard to navigate under any circumstances. But it can be even more difficult when your child has cancer. In addition to worrying about your child's health, you may also be concerned about disrupting your family's lives and routines.

It's only natural to feel frustrated and worried. But there are some steps you can take to make things a little easier.

Strategies for managing cancer care

When you're coping with a child's cancer diagnosis, challenges may arise. And even after your best efforts, some things won't go as planned. Try to be patient with yourself and others as you learn to navigate your child's cancer care.

To help things go as smoothly as possible with your child's treatment, try these tips:

- **Get to know the healthcare team.** This will help build communication and trust between you, your child, and team members.
- **Participate in the hospital handoff procedures.** When 1 shift at the hospital ends and another begins, there is a "handoff" of patient information between care team members. You can take part in this by learning the team's handoff procedures. Track information across handoffs. Ask questions and make sure you understand the day's plan.
- **Ask for an interpreter.** Request an interpreter if you or anyone in your family does not understand the language used by a member of the care team. Everyone has a legal right to free interpretation services for accurate communication and safety.
- **Maintain medical records.** You can usually access some of your child's records using an online patient portal. If a portal is not available, request hard copies of records from your child's healthcare provider. These will help you to monitor your child's progress. Always keep an updated list of your child's current medicines.
- **Keep important documents with you.** Always be sure to carry your own photo ID, a certified copy of your child's birth certificate, and social security numbers. These will help to verify your child's identity.
- **Bring personal items to the hospital.** You should have access to essentials such as clothes and medicines. But also be sure to bring comforting objects, such as stuffed animals, a blanket, or photos of family and friends.

Communicating with your child's care team

Maintaining open lines of dialogue with your child's care team is critical. Your child's care team members are well-trained and have experience in treating cancer in young people. But you're an expert when it comes to your child. You can help give advice on the best ways to interact with your child.

To build positive communication with your child's care team:

- Be clear, direct, and honest.
- Be an active partner in your child's care.
- Keep a notebook with test and treatment logs.
- Ask questions about test results or any other subject you don't understand.
- Sign a release of information if there's anyone else who should have access to your child's medical

team.

Finding help and support

Understandably, daily life might be difficult to manage during your child's treatment. Resources are available to help. Here are just a few.

- **CancerCare for Kids.** Certain members of your child's care team, such as counselors or patient advocates, are trained to assist your family with mental health issues. If you need additional support, you can find more resources at the CancerCare website at www.cancercare.org/tagged/children.
- **Hope Lodge Community.** This organization provides free hotel suites for families. You can find out more at the American Cancer Society (ACS) website at www.cancer.org/support-programs-and-services/patient-lodging/hope-lodge.html.
- **Extended Stay America.** Like Hope Lodge, this network through the ACS provides free and discounted stays for cancer patients. Learn more at www.cancer.org/about-us/our-partners/extended-stay-america.html.
- **Road to Recovery.** This ACS program uses volunteer drivers to help people get to medical appointments. To access this service, create an account on Roundtrip Health's website at roundtriphealth.com/acs.

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