

# Getting around



“My husband would stay with our three-year-old daughter throughout the week. And a different family member would come with me each week [to the treatment centre in a different city]. The team was so good to arrange my appointments so I could get home on the weekend.”

**Charlotte**  
**Diagnosed with brain cancer**

## How does this affect me?

Getting a cancer diagnosis and undergoing cancer treatment can lead to new challenges in your life. Some of these challenges may involve getting around: to the community centre, the clinic, or the family gathering at the other end of town. Perhaps you would like to go on a trip, but are having trouble getting organized or fear you won't handle train or air travel very well.

If these tasks seem overwhelming, remember that you don't have to do everything on your own. There are times in life when it's healthy to receive help, rather than give it. Don't hesitate to reach out to family, friends, and professional support services to help you get from point A to point B.

Here are just a few of the difficulties you may encounter as you seek to go places:

- You lack the energy for planning your outing.
- You don't have a vehicle or other easy means of transportation.
- You worry that environmental conditions such as slippery sidewalks make it riskier to walk outside.
- You get tired on longer trips.
- You get uncomfortable when sitting in place (e.g. in a car or train) for long periods of time.



## What can I do to make it easier to get around?



### Planning your outing

- Whether you are going to the grocery store or to another province, planning your trip can put you at ease and help you manage unexpected situations.
- Accept that you may sometimes need to pay for taxis or app-based ride services (e.g. Uber, Lyft) for those times you need to get somewhere but don't have the energy.
- Consider setting aside some money for such situations.



### Travelling safely

- Talk to your healthcare team about if and when you can travel, and let them know where you are going.
- Create a document with key medical information to bring on your trip. This may include type of cancer, other health issues, medications, key contacts.
- Request back-up copies of your prescriptions and take them along with you.
- Keep your medications (in their original containers) and paperwork in your carry-on luggage; consider bringing extra medicine in case your return is delayed.
- Find out from your healthcare team when to take your medications if you cross time zones.
- During the trip, you can keep healthy snacks and drinks handy to maintain your energy.
- Pace yourself. It's OK to skip a day of sight-seeing or visiting people. The important thing is to relax and enjoy yourself.



## COVID-19 travel information

Think carefully before travelling during the COVID-19 pandemic, and check travel restrictions in your destination location and upon your return. If you do decide to travel, follow all recommended hygiene protocols during the trip.



## Getting ready to fly

- Make sure you have the right vaccinations. Some cancer treatments interfere with vaccines, which could affect where you can travel, so check with your healthcare team.
- Consider having your travel documents translated if you're travelling to a country with a different native language.
- If needed, ask airport staff to help you get to your gate using a wheelchair or other mobility aid.
- Sitting through a long flight raises the risk of developing a blood clot, especially if you have had recent surgery or are on chemotherapy, so there may be a limit to the distance you can fly. Check with your doctor, who may recommend taking Aspirin (a blood thinner) before the trip.
- To reduce the risk of blood clots while flying, wear compression stockings and get up to walk around at least once per hour.



## What help do I need?

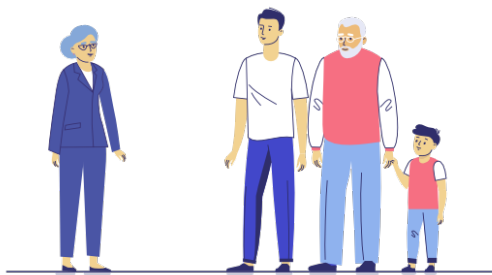
### Put it in writing

Keep a journal or electronic document in which you list all the places you need and want to go, and the type of assistance you may need. This will make it easier for you to ask for specific types of help—or to accept help when it's offered. Your list could include:

- Help to pick up items for your home or garden
- Rides to get you to recreational activities
- Rides to and from medical appointments
- Other transportation options to get to your appointments
- Travel arrangement research and travel insurance options

### Act early

Don't wait until the time you need help to ask for it. Most things take time to organize, so you—and your support team—will feel more relaxed if you request help as soon as you identify the need.



## Where can I find help?



### Your social network

- People are often happy to help, but may not know where to start. Give yourself permission to ask for and accept help.
- Ask your family and friends to think about when and how they can provide help. Write it all down so you can refer to it when needed.
- If you live with your family, hold regular meetings to inform everyone about your upcoming medical appointments and find out who can drive or accompany you.
- Be honest about what you need and don't need, and thank people for their help.
- Explore online communities for people with cancer (e.g. Cancer Support Group on Facebook) and ask for feedback on your specific challenge, bearing in mind that respondents are not offering professional advice.



### **Formal assistance**

- If the cancer or its treatment is interfering with your mobility, you may be able to obtain a permit to park at an accessible (handicapped) parking space. Ask your hospital or medical clinic for guidance.
- The Canadian Cancer Society provides volunteer transportation to and from treatment for people with cancer. To register or find out more, call 1-800-263-6750. [Note: The program was interrupted due to Covid-19, but is set to relaunch as soon as it can be done safely.]
- If you have trouble paying for travel for cancer treatment, The Canadian Cancer Society travel treatment fund may be able to help with travel and accommodation costs. You can print the application form from the [website](#) or call CCS at 1-888-939-3333.
- Wherever you live in Quebec and whatever your question about getting around, feel free to contact Info-cancer at 1-800-363-0063 or [infocancer@fqc.qc.ca](mailto:infocancer@fqc.qc.ca).
- The [Quebec Cancer Foundation](#) provides a resource directory. You can search for the organizations near you offering a variety of services including home help, lodging, transportation, and other supportive resources.

### **••• Other support strategies**

- Don't assume that the type of help you need isn't available—it often is! If you're not sure where to start, ask a member of your healthcare team for guidance.
- Ask your doctor to recommend a social worker or pivot nurse, who may be able to connect you with the assistance you need.
- Ask the centre hosting the activity you wish to attend if they provide any transportation services.
- Your school, work, or spiritual community may be happy to help you get around. If you are uncomfortable reaching out on your own, ask a friend in the community to ask on your behalf.



## What can I do to look after myself?

Looking after yourself will make you feel better in general and will free up more energy to tackle the challenges of getting around. Start with the basics:



### Feed yourself well

- A balanced diet helps you regain your energy and lead a more active lifestyle, so you can get around more easily.
- Be sure to get enough protein, which helps your body heal and keeps your immune system healthy. Protein is found in fish, poultry, eggs, nuts, dried beans, lean red meat.
- You may need extra energy and protein to maintain your weight; eat small, frequent meals, supplemented by nutritious snacks or supplements as needed.
- Check with your healthcare team to find out if there any foods or beverages that you should not eat or drink because of your cancer or treatment.



### Move your body

- It is generally fine to exercise during treatment, but check with your healthcare team before starting.
- Physical activity can reduce treatment side-effects like nausea and fatigue, making it more comfortable to get around.
- Physical activity actually reduces fatigue, leaving you with more energy to get out of the house.
- Choose an activity that you enjoy doing or would like to try, and that you can fit into your schedule without too much difficulty.

For further information see [Looking After Yourself](#).

## Resources

For more information on carrying out domestic chores and support organizations, check out the resources below.

[Canadian Cancer Society – Coping when you have cancer](#)

[Canadian Cancer Society – Family life and cancer](#)

[Canadian Cancer Society – If you are single and have cancer](#)

[Canadian Cancer Society – Eating well during and after treatment](#)

[Canadian Cancer Society – Being active](#)

[Canadian Cancer Society – Travel and cancer](#)

[Cancer.net – Traveling with cancer](#)

[Quebec Cancer Foundation – Life habits](#)

## Acknowledgement of sources

The content of this document has been adapted from the following sources:

- Canadian Cancer Society. Coping when you have cancer. 2017.
- Canadian Cancer Society. Family life and cancer. 2020.
- Canadian Cancer Society. If you are single and have cancer. 2020.
- Canadian Cancer Society. Eating well during and after treatment. 2020.
- Canadian Cancer Society. Being active. 2020.
- Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. Living with cancer. 2020.
- Cancer Council (Australia). Caring for someone with cancer. 2017.
- Cancer Council (Australia). Coping with cancer. 2011.
- Cancer.net. Traveling with cancer. 2014.
- Quebec Cancer Foundation. Life habits. 2020.



## **Healthcare professional endorsement**

The content of this document has been reviewed and approved by a team of healthcare professionals and clinical experts.

## **Disclaimer**

Please note that this fact sheet is not intended as a substitute for consultation with a healthcare professional. If you have questions about your health, or any medical issue, you should contact a healthcare professional right away. You should not delay seeking medical advice, or disregard professional medical advice, because of information in this fact sheet. Before beginning any health treatment, always consult your doctor. All care has been taken to ensure that the information contained in this document is accurate at the time of publication. e-IMPAQc is not responsible for any injury or damage to persons or property arising out of, or related to, any use of the fact sheet, or because of any errors or omissions.

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