

Getting support



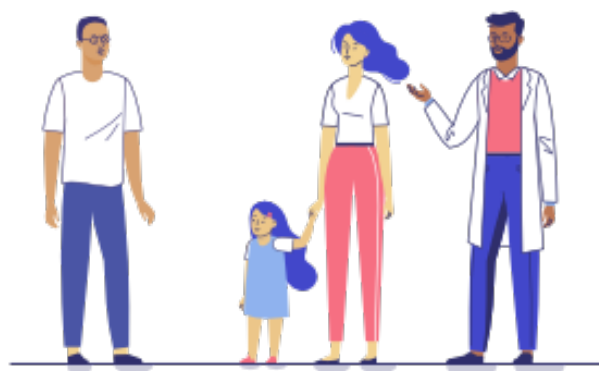
“Before I was diagnosed, I remember being amazed by the many services which were set up for cancer patients. It wasn’t until I needed them that I realized the problem was not what was around, but where.”

Dante
Diagnosed with prostate cancer

How does this affect me?

Following a cancer diagnosis, it can be hard to manage responsibilities that you used to take care of. You may need additional support to manage tasks at home and work. It is not unusual to need help at this time! Some of your loved ones may also be struggling to find the support that they need to be able to best help you.

This is a new experience for all of you. It is normal for you and your loved ones to find it hard to organize the needed support. Fortunately, you can take steps to put this in place.



What can I do to help me and those caring for me feel more supported?

First, identify the type of support providers that may be available to you. You can think of the types of services you may need divided among three support teams. These teams are: 1) your healthcare team, 2) support services, 3) friends and family. The following list

identifies some of the many resources from the three support teams. Take some time to review this list. Identify who you and your loved ones might need, both now and in the coming months. Who you choose to include is up to you!



Team 1: Your healthcare team

If you have a non-professional caregiver supporting, identify them to your healthcare team. This could be a spouse/partner, friend, family member or colleague. This will allow them to be recognized for their role and get support. They can receive information and education to empower them in their role.

Your healthcare team likely includes some of the following members. However, you may want someone else to be included such as:

- Oncologist
- Radio-oncologist
- Oncologist surgeon
- Psychiatrist
- Pharmacist
- Family doctor
- Nurse
- Dietitian
- Psychosocial oncology professionals (e.g., psychologist, social worker, spiritual care, family therapist)
- Physiotherapist
- Occupational therapist
- Complementary therapy (e.g., music therapist, massage therapist)



Team 2: Support services

The following are support services that you and your caregiver may need:

- Home care
- Caregiver respite
- Financial services
- Home maintenance
- Transport
- Mobility
- Legal services
- Support groups
- Housework
- Community Support (e.g., Cancer Wellness Centre and Supportive Associations)
- Child and pet care

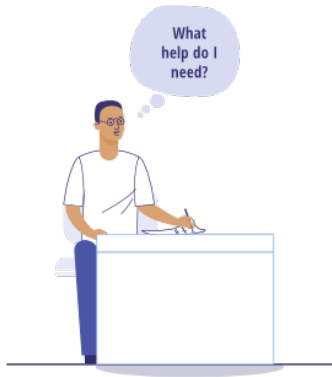


Team 3: Friends and family

You may have to balance the needs from your family with the new reality of managing cancer. This can involve changing roles and responsibilities within your family. By talking about these with them, you can prevent overwhelming anyone with too many responsibilities. Make a list of those close to you that could be approached for help. The list may include:

- Friends
- Family
- Work colleagues
- Neighbours
- Spiritual group members
- Other parents at your children's school

For more information see [Changing Roles and Responsibilities](#).



What help do I need?

Once you have identified which people or organizations you want to ask for support, now you can look at the kind of help you and your loved ones need. If you are having trouble with this, try a problem solving, step-by-step approach. In this way, you can break down bigger problems to an easier size. For further information see [Problem solving](#). Start by making a list of areas where you need help. This may include some of the following:

••• Other kinds of support

When in doubt, ask. Don't assume certain types of help aren't available to you. Look for support services for:

- Housework and home maintenance
- Personal grooming
- Caregiver respite
- Emotional support
- Legal or financial issues



Friends and family

Don't be afraid to ask for help. People around you may be eager to help but they don't know where to start. They will be very happy to hear from you and be able to do what is really needed. Family and friends can help with:

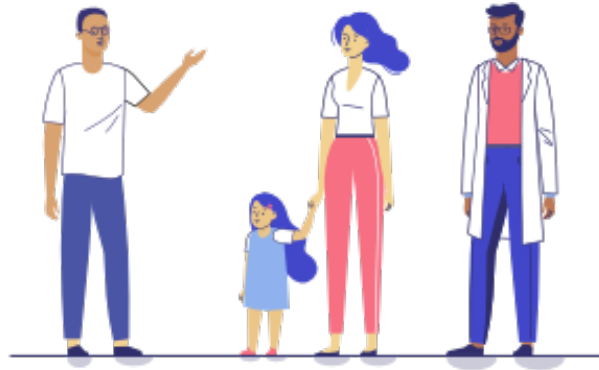
- Child care or homework help
- Pet care
- Gardening and maintenance of your property
- Transportation
- Groceries and meal preparation



Your healthcare team

Your healthcare team plans and gives treatment. They can:

- Help you understand and manage side effects
- Provide psychosocial and practical support to you and your family
- Help to support, educate and encourage your engagement and participation in your care



Where can I find help?

Your healthcare team

- You can ask your doctor to refer you to a specialist or another healthcare professional. For example, this could be a physical therapist.
- There may be a psychosocial professional on your team. If not, you can ask your doctor for a referral. Psychosocial professionals can help you understand, navigate and adjust to the social, psychological, emotional and spiritual aspects of cancer care. They can also provide or help you find support services you and your family may need, as well as support groups for patients or caregivers.

Friends and family

The people around you may be eager to help

- Ask your family and friends to think about how often and how long they could provide help. Write it all down to refer to when needed. Try using social media to communicate and coordinate these tasks with your friends and family.
- If your family lives with you, have regular family meetings to talk about the week ahead. Together you can create a schedule or calendar that includes your upcoming medical appointments and treatments as well as other family members' activities that week. Make lists of tasks that need to be done and agree on who does what.
- Give feedback when family members try to help. Be honest about what you need and don't need and let them know that their help is appreciated.

••• Other kinds of support

- If you live in Montreal, you can get in touch with the following centres for support:
 - [Hope & Cope](#)
 - [West Island Cancer Wellness Centre](#)
 - [Fondation Virage](#)
 - [Cedars CanSupport](#)
- Canadian Cancer Society. Call the Canadian Cancer Society (1-888-939-3333) and ask for the “Community Services Locator” service. The CCS provides cancer information, an online community at [CancerConnection.ca](#), and access to support services in your area.
- [Fondation Québécoise du Cancer](#). Call the Info-cancer hotline (1-800-363-0063). This hotline is for both patients and their loved ones. You can have a confidential conversation with a nurse who can direct you where to go to meet your needs.
- The Foundation also provides a [resource directory](#). You can search for the organizations near you offering a variety of services. Some of these include home help, lodging, transportation, and other supportive resources.
- Consult your local CLSC for any support services they offer or a referral to a local service you may need!
- Phone book/social media. If you don't find exactly what you're looking for, reach out to a service provider. They might be able to point you in the right direction.
- Your school, work or spiritual community could cover practical needs.
- If available, use online shopping and grocery delivery.



Act early

Some things can take a little bit of time to organize. As such, you are better off organizing help as soon as you identify the need.

Resources

For more information on support organizations, check out the resources below.

[Canadian Cancer Society – How we can help](#)

[Quebec cancer foundation – Info-Cancer Hotline](#)

[Gouvernement du Québec – Using the Meals on Wheels Service](#)

Acknowledgement of sources

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

- Fondation Québécoise du cancer. Trouver de l'aide pour alléger le quotidien. 2020.
- Canadian Association of Psychosocial Oncology. A Guide to counselling and support for families and friends. 2009.
- Canadian Cancer Society. Coping when you have cancer. 2020.
- Canadian Cancer Society. Family life and cancer. 2020.
- Canadian Cancer society. Your healthcare team. 2020.
- Coping together. Getting on top of symptoms. 2013.
- Cancer Care Ontario. Oncology Caregiver Support Framework. 2019.
- TEMPO. Stressed by the changes in our roles and responsibilities. 2016.
- TEMPO. Knowing where to go for more support. 2016.

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.

Reproduction and copyright

Any reproduction or distribution, in whole or in part, of this factsheet is prohibited without obtaining prior written consent of the e-IMPAQc project lead. Permission can be obtained by writing to e-impaqc@mcgill.ca.

Last updated: June 16, 2022