

# How can I help?

## Supporting family or friends with cancer

Finding out a family member or friend has cancer is no good, but there are many ways to show your concern or offer support.

Your first visit to them after learning of cancer might be emotional. The following may help:

- Show you care with a hug or kiss – whatever you would normally do.
- Tell them you're willing to listen if they want.
- Share a joke and have a laugh when appropriate and when needed.
- Check if they would like you to attend doctors visit with them. It is good to have another set of ears to listen to what the doctors say.

After diagnosis it might feel like everything happens fast and there's no time to stop and think. Ask the doctor if you can have a meeting with family members, children or close friends to help everyone in your family understand what treatment you are having and its effects.

### Practical ways to help

- Go grocery shopping.
- Pick up prescriptions.
- Help around the house – clean, do the laundry, look after pets, take care of plants, take out the rubbish.
- Mind children or grandchildren.
- Make dinner or organise others to drop off a meal.
- Drive them to treatment.
- Take notes during a doctor's appointment.
- Sit with them during treatment.
- Write down questions you want to ask when you visit the doctor.



HOW CAN I HELP?

**Some helpful ideas**

**Stay in touch** – call just to let them know you’re thinking about them, text with a joke or photo.

**Talk about other things** – people going through treatment sometimes need a break from talking about cancer. Chat about their interests and hobbies or catch them up on all the gossip with family, friends, TV shows, news.

**Expect sadness and tears** – try not to ignore uncomfortable topics or feelings.

**Take the children when visiting** – it’s great to hear them play.

**Make flexible plans** – that can easily be changed in case something comes up or they need to cancel.

**Offer to visit whenever it suits them** – often sick people don’t sleep well at night so they may finally nod off to sleep in the early morning.

**Make plans for the future** – this gives your family member or friend something to look forward to.

Treat your family member or friend the same way you always have, not like a cancer patient.

Remember that needs change often because of treatment, symptoms and side effects. Be creative with the help you offer, and change plans as needed.

**For more information**

- Call Cancer Council **13 11 20**
- Call your nearest hospital
- Call your local council
- Visit **cancercouncil.com.au**
- Visit **menzies.edu.au/cancer**