

SUPPORT IS CARE

Asking for Supportive Cancer Care as a caregiver

A guide to getting the support you deserve.



Supportive Cancer Care isn't just for the person living with cancer—it's for you, too. This resource is here to help you advocate for the support you and your loved one deserve. As a caregiver, you need tools and care that help you manage stress, look after your own health, and continue showing up in the ways that matter most. Taking care of yourself is an important part of taking care of the people you love.

The questions and tips below can help you start conversations about the Supportive Cancer Care services available to both of you. They're designed to help you feel prepared, informed, and confident during visits with a doctor or care team. Even if you haven't heard of the term "Supportive Cancer Care," these services are part of high-quality cancer care, and you have every right to ask about them.



The prep checklist

Before your appointment

A few things to help you feel prepared and supported.

☐

Prepare a list of your loved one's symptoms and side effects, and how they're affecting their daily life. Be prepared to ask what Supportive Cancer Care services are available to help.

☐

Note you and your loved one's emotional concerns (stress, anxiety, burnout, depression) to discuss. Ask what emotional support Supportive Cancer Care offers.

☐

Write down practical barriers affecting caregiving (transportation, finances, work schedule, meals, childcare). Then, ask what exists to help address them.

☐

Gather documentation of medications, treatments, and any Supportive Cancer Care services your loved one is already using. This helps your care team see the complete picture and identify additional support needs.

☐

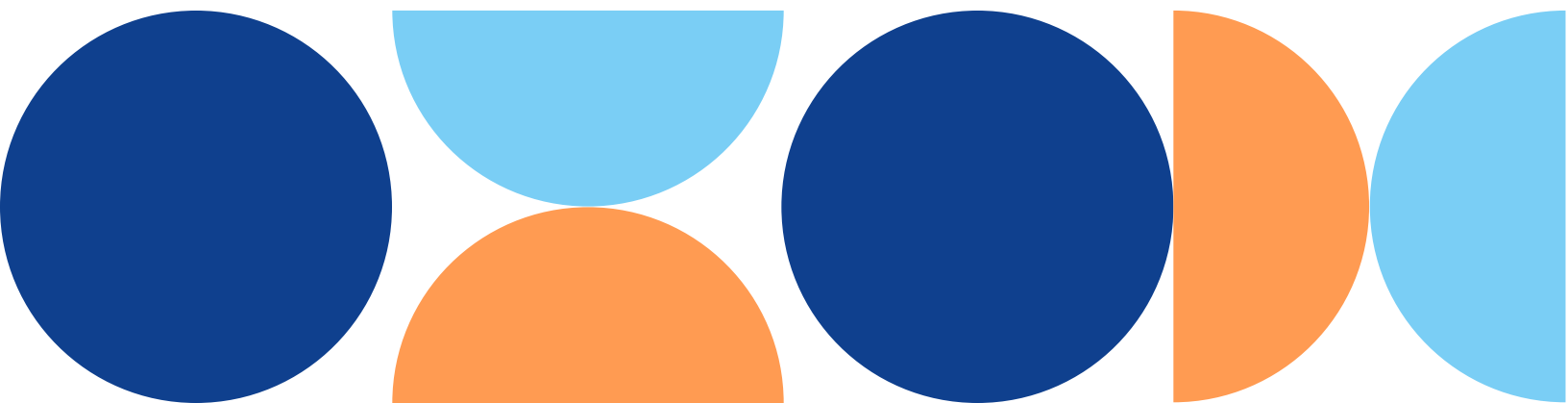
Take time to plan your schedule and self-care for that day, make sure you have space to rest and get support.

☐

Bring a notebook to take notes or plan to record the visit so you can capture all information about treatment, side effects, next steps, and Supportive Cancer Care services recommended for you and your loved one.

If you do want to record the session, consider using your smartphone.

If you need translation services, or would like a social worker in the room, never hesitate to ask.



During your appointment

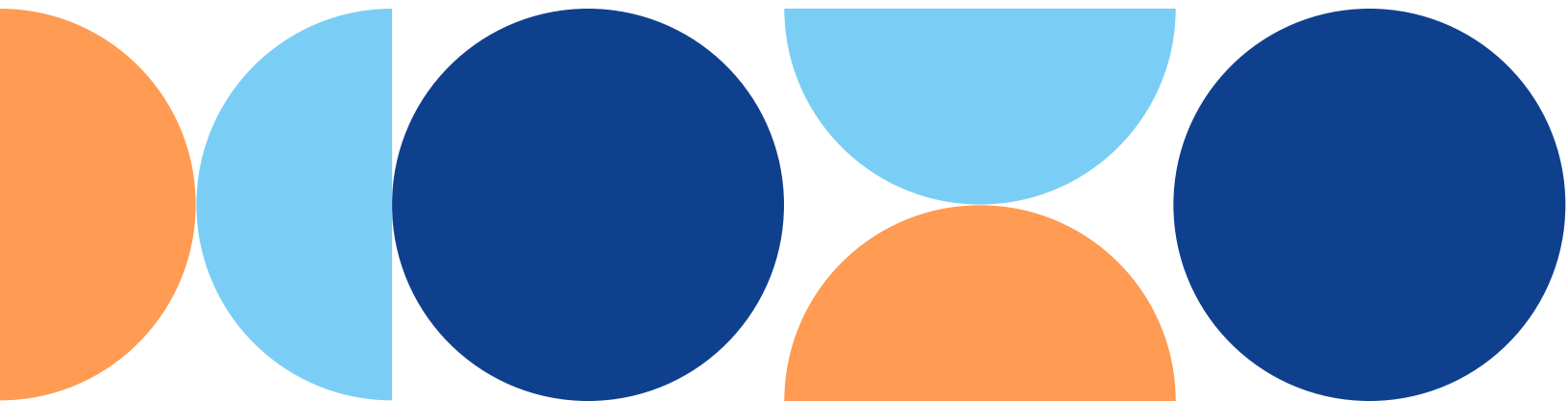
Questions that can help guide your conversation.



Tip

Identify the three to four questions that are most important to you. Prioritize asking those first, so you don't run out of time.

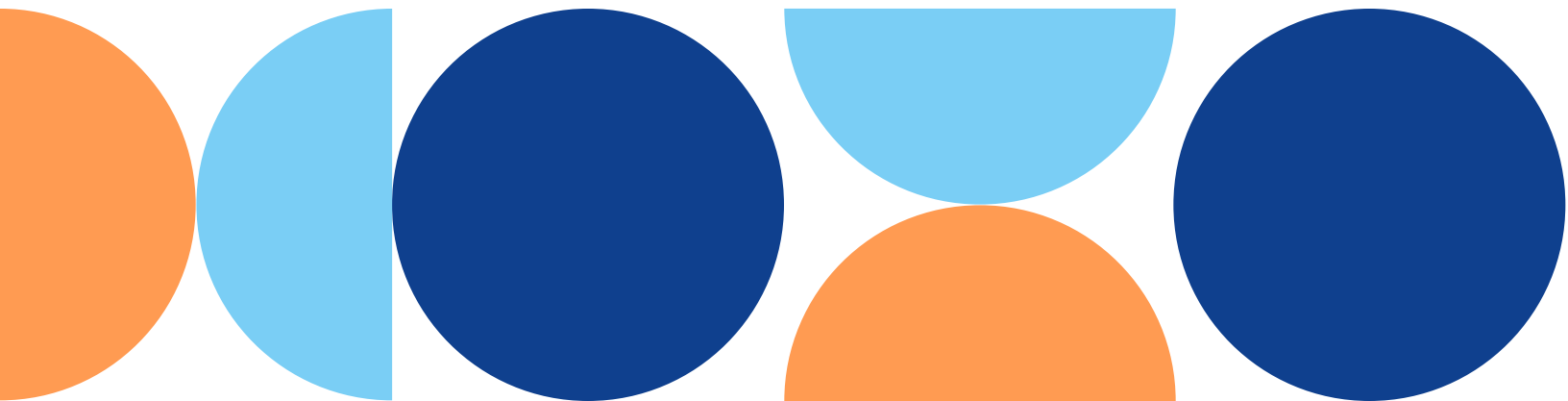
- ☐ What Supportive Cancer Care services are available for my loved one and for myself?
- ☐ Can we please have a written visit summary that includes key details and important contact information?
- ☐ Are there counseling or emotional support services available to help us manage stress and emotions?
- ☐ What treatment side effects should we look out for, and how can I help manage them?
- ☐ What caregiver support groups or community resources can help me connect with others?
- ☐ Can you walk me through what to expect so I can plan my schedule and responsibilities?
- ☐ Are practical services available, such as help with transportation, meals, and financial guidance?
- ☐ Who should I contact between appointments if my loved one is struggling or if I need support or direction?



After your appointment

Simple steps to keep the support going.

- ☐ Organize and save the visit summary and medical documents where you can easily find them.
- ☐ Review notes with your loved one while the information is fresh. Then, send a follow-up message (email or patient portal) summarizing what you heard. Confirm the next steps, including any Supportive Cancer Care referrals or resources mentioned.
- ☐ Help your loved one schedule appointments with counselors, support groups, social workers, or any other Supportive Cancer Care referrals within a few days.
- ☐ Share available Supportive Cancer Care resources with other family members involved in caregiving.
- ☐ Track which Supportive Cancer Care services are helping both you and your loved one, so you can adjust your plan as needs change.
- ☐ Take a moment for yourself. Even a few minutes of rest or an activity that brings you peace can help you recharge.



Helpful tips



Delegate tasks. Make a list of things others can help with, like meals, transportation, childcare, errands, or household tasks. And share it with people who offer support. Let them lift some of the load.



Access caregiver support services. Counseling, support groups, and mental health services are part of Supportive Cancer Care. Ask the care team how to access them. You deserve this support.



Speak up about barriers that affect caregiving. Financial stress, work conflicts, and transportation challenges are exactly what Supportive Cancer Care can help address. Tell the care team so they can connect you with resources to help.



Ask questions. Never hesitate to speak up if something isn't completely clear. Your understanding matters, and your doctor or care team are there to answer any questions or concerns you may have.



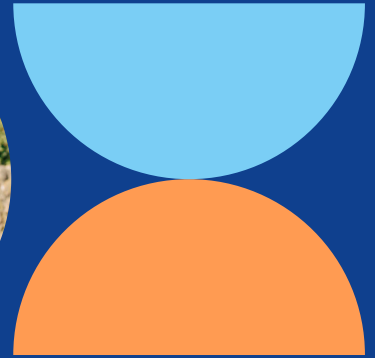
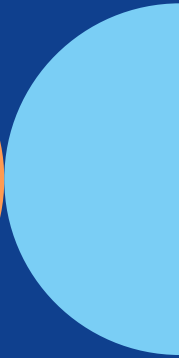
Take notes during appointments. You can use your smartphone or a recording device to take notes, so you can review them later. There is a lot to take in and process. Notes or recordings can help you remember important details. Don't hesitate to ask for a translator if you need one.



Share Supportive Cancer Care resources with your family. Keep everyone informed about available services and coordinate how family members can help, so the burden isn't entirely on you.



Seek another perspective if needed. If you want clarity or reassurance about your loved one's treatment plan, it's okay to request a second opinion. You deserve confidence in the care they receive.



Additional caregiver resources

These trusted resources are designed specifically to help you navigate caregiving with confidence and compassion, from emotional support and practical guidance to financial assistance.

ACS CARES

Download the ACS CARES mobile app to get personalized cancer information right when you need it. Plus, 24/7 access to American Cancer Society specialists who understand what you're navigating as a caregiver. You'll also connect with trained volunteers—virtually or in person—who've supported a loved one through cancer and truly get what you're experiencing. Real people who've been there, real guidance for your journey, real support for you.

Caregiver Action Network

This resource offers practical tools and emotional support for people caring for someone with cancer. Whether you're dealing with emotions, managing daily tasks, taking care of yourself, or caring from a distance, this website has resources to support you. You don't have to do this alone.

Family Reach

The Financial Resource Center connects you with free assistance for food, housing, utilities, and transportation during cancer treatment, so you can focus on caring for your loved one and yourself. You're not alone in this.

CaringBridge

CaringBridge is a free platform where you can share updates, request specific help like meals or transportation, and surround yourself with community support during your loved one's health journey—all in one private place.