



## Building a Support Network

---

### What Resources Are Available

There are many places where you can get assistance. Your hospital is one of the first sources that can help you get the support you need. Hospital support services are an important part of your care. Support services that may be available include nursing services, social services, nutritional services, rehabilitation services, or spiritual services.

Some people worry that asking for emotional support is a sign of weakness, as if they are somehow expected to "be strong" and handle the situation on their own. However, solitude and strength are not the same thing; you don't have to be alone to be strong. Emotional support is crucial at every stage of the cancer journey, and it can come from many places. In addition to your family and friends, consider contacting sources of support such as health professionals, support groups, and your place of worship. Asking for support is one way you can take control of your situation. Talking with family and friends can bring comfort and reassurance.

Cancer can be an awkward thing to talk about, and sometimes people may worry that they will upset you by bringing up the topic or talking about your illness. You may need to take the first step. Individual or group counseling or support groups can help you cope with the stresses your illness brings in your everyday life. Many people with cancer find it easier to talk with people who are going through experiences like theirs. Support groups can also provide important practical information about your cancer and its treatment. Community agencies can sometimes relieve the demands cancer places on families and friends.

Most importantly, a person with cancer is never alone. There are people who care and who are ready to help.

### Additional Resources

#### Other Organizations

National Cancer Institute (NCI)

Telephone: 1-(800)-4-CANCER

Internet address: [www.nci.nih.gov](http://www.nci.nih.gov)

NCI is part of the government supported National Institutes of Health. It is the government's principal agency for cancer research, training, and information dissemination. NCI provides information on cancer research, diagnosis, treatments, comprehensive cancer centers, clinical trials, and community clinical oncology programs.

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship (NCCS)

Telephone: 1-(888) 650-9127

Internet address: <http://www.canceradvocacy.org/>

A network of independent organizations working in the area of cancer survivorship and support. Its primary goal is to generate a nationwide awareness of cancer survivorship. NCCS serves as an information clearinghouse and an advocacy group. Publishes quarterly newsletter.

OncoLink

Internet address: [www.oncolink.upenn.edu](http://www.oncolink.upenn.edu)

OncoLink is sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania Cancer Center, contains detailed descriptions of a variety of cancers and cancer information, news developments, survivors' stories, and answers to frequently asked questions.

### Other ACS Information

- [Anxiety, Fear and Depression](#)
- [Cancer Facts and Figures 2001 \(PDF\)](#)
- [Chemotherapy Principles](#)
- [Children With Cancer in the Family: Dealing With Diagnosis](#)
- [Clinical Trials--Patient Participation](#)
- [Complementary and Alternative Methods for Cancer Management](#)
- [Communicating with Friends and Relatives About Cancer](#)
- [Heredity and Cancer](#)
- [Medical Insurance and Financial Assistance for the Cancer Patient](#)
- [NCCN Cancer Pain Treatment Guidelines for Patients](#)
- [NCCN Nausea and Vomiting Treatment Guidelines for Patients with Cancer](#)
- [Pain Control A Guide for People with Cancer and Their Families](#)
- [Breakthrough Cancer Pain: Questions & Answers](#)
- [Sexuality & Cancer: For The Woman Who Has Cancer & Her Partner](#)
- [Staging](#)
- [Surgery](#)
- [Talking With Your Doctor](#)
- [What is Chemotherapy and How Does it Work?](#)
- [What is Radiation Therapy?](#)

### ACS Books

- [Prostate Cancer, Revised Edition](#)
- [Colorectal Cancer](#)
- [Women and Cancer](#)
- [Caregiving -- A Step-by-Step Resource For Caring For the Person with Cancer at Home](#)

### Other Publications

- Capossela, Cappy, and Sheila Warnock. *Share the Care: How to Organize a Group to Care for Someone Who is Seriously Ill*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.
- Dollinger, Malin, Ernest H. Rosenbaum, and Greg Cable. *Everyone's Guide to Cancer Therapy*. Kansas City, Missouri: Andrews McMeel, 1998.
- Harpham, Wendy. *Diagnosis Cancer: Your Guide Through the First Few Months*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997.
- Meyer, Maria, Derr, Paula. *The Comfort of Home: An Illustrated Step-by-Step Guide for Caregivers*. Portland, Oregon: Care Trust Publications, 1998.
- Morra, Marion, and Eve Potts. *Choices*. New York: Avon Books, 1994.
- Robinson, Rebecca Y., and Jeanne A. Petrek. *A Step-By-Step Guide to Dealing With Your Breast Cancer*. Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1994.
- Schover, Leslie R. *Sexuality and Fertility After Cancer*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997

Inclusion in this list does not imply endorsement by the American Cancer Society.

## **American Cancer Society Programs**

The American Cancer Society (ACS) is the nationwide, community-based, voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service.

The ACS offers up-to-date cancer information, educational programs, services, and referrals. Check your local telephone directory for your nearest ACS Unit or call 1-800-ACS-2345.

The following programs may be available in your community:

### **I Can Cope**

I Can Cope is an educational program for people facing cancer, either personally or as a caregiver. The program offers reliable information, peer support, and practical coping skills.

### **Look Good...Feel Better**

This program was developed specifically for women going through chemotherapy or radiation treatment. It teaches skills to improve and enhance appearance through the use of cosmetics, wigs, turbans and scarves. The program focuses on beauty techniques that can help a woman cope with the physical changes resulting from cancer treatment.

### **Man to Man**

The Man to Man Education and Support Program is specially designed for men and their families who have prostate cancer concerns. The purpose of the program is to provide accurate information about diagnosis, treatment options, living with side effects of treatment, and other related issues in a supportive atmosphere. Men and their partners are able to ask questions and share common experiences and feelings with the assistance of qualified health professionals and the mutual aid of the group. This program also promotes awareness of prostate cancer as major health care concern for all men. It is believed that men and their partners can greatly benefit from the program and that participation immediately following diagnosis is especially important to help reduce anxiety and facilitate a healthy adjustment.

### **Reach to Recovery**

Reach to Recovery volunteers are breast cancer survivors who have successfully adjusted to their own diagnosis and treatment. The program carefully matches a trained volunteer with a woman facing the emotional and physical challenges related to the diagnosis, treatment, and effects of her breast cancer. The patient may request a Reach to Recovery visit at any point in her breast cancer experience, including early support at the time of diagnosis. Visits can also be arranged for women considering breast reconstruction or for a woman experiencing a recurrence.

To schedule a Reach to Recovery visit, contact the American Cancer Society office listed in the telephone directory or call 1-800-ACS-2345. A visit can also be requested by the patient or by her doctor, nurse, family member, or friend. Although personal visits are recommended, the visit can also take place over the telephone if necessary. The Reach to Recovery visitor often makes a follow-up visit or phone call to the patient to answer any questions or to offer additional support if needed. Long-term support, however, is not part of the program.

Revision date: 1/29/01