



## Caring for Children during Your Hospitalization/Treatments

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**Maintain as normal a routine as possible.** Children thrive on routine - it helps them feel safe. You may not be able to spend as much time with your children because of doctors' appointments and your treatment schedule. Although you can try to keep as many things the same as possible, you may need to create a new routine that fits this cancer journey.

**Let your children participate in your care.** Remember your children are now part of a family that is fighting cancer. To help them feel included, give them age-appropriate tasks, such as bringing you a book to read, helping you select a wig, etc. However, don't rely on them to take on too many added responsibilities. Also, try not to be offended if they don't want to help.

**Maintain discipline.** Disciplining your children can be especially difficult during this time. You may feel guilty about it or that you don't have energy for it. Yet, a breakdown in discipline can send signals to your children that something is very wrong. Try to set consistent, familiar rules and require good behavior. Your children may behave badly because they are upset or are seeking attention. Let them know that you love and accept them, but not their misbehavior.

**Provide a sense of control.** Cancer can turn things upside down. Hold family meetings on a regular basis to update your children on how things are going. Let friends and family take over some household duties to maintain stability in the daily routine.

**Have fun together.** Make an effort to have fun with your children. Activities can also help children use up excess energy and relieve anxiety. On days when you don't have a lot of energy, try reading, watching TV/movies, or doing artwork together. Share poems and songs that have special meaning to you both.

**Pay attention to warning signs.** Children may become withdrawn or misbehave if they are upset. Watch for any disturbances in their behavior or attitude and consider telling their teachers so they may also be alert to changes. Remember, you are the expert on your children. Trust your own sense of how to best support them during this time.

**Seek counseling/support.** Let your children know they don't have to face your illness alone. Arrange for them to speak with a counselor individually or go to family counseling. In addition, a support group for children whose parent has cancer can provide a safe place to share their feelings. A hospital social worker, nurse or psychologist may be able to recommend resources as well.

**Find your way.** There is no right or wrong way to handle the situation. Each family finds its own way to adjust. The actual words you use are not as important as letting your children know that you are there for them. You may even find that you and your children develop a closer connection as you talk about your illness together.

*This information is neither intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical guidance.  
Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider prior to making decisions about your medical care.*