

Supporting a Loved One
**THROUGH BREAST
CANCER**



A Step-by-Step Guide for
Family & Friends

BY A MODEL PATIENT

Understanding the Diagnosis

When someone you love is diagnosed with breast cancer, it can feel overwhelming. It's important to understand the basics of the disease and acknowledge the emotional impact it has on both the patient and their loved ones.



What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer is a disease where cells in the breast grow out of control. The type and stage of the cancer will determine the treatment plan and prognosis. Every case is unique.

Emotional Reactions to Expect:

- Shock and disbelief
- Fear and anxiety
- Anger or frustration
- Sadness or grief

Your loved one may go through a wide range of emotions. It's essential to listen without judgment and avoid saying things like, "You'll be fine," or "At least it's not worse." Instead, offer supportive statements such as, "I'm here for you," or "It's okay to feel what you're feeling."

Key Message:

It's normal to feel overwhelmed. Your role is to listen, support, and walk with your loved one through this journey.

What to Expect from Common Breast Cancer Treatments

1. Surgery

- Purpose: To remove cancer from the breast.
- Types: Lumpectomy (removal of the tumor) or mastectomy (removal of the breast).
- Common Side Effects: Pain, swelling, fatigue, emotional adjustment.

2. Chemotherapy

- Purpose: To kill cancer cells throughout the body.
- Common Side Effects: Hair loss, nausea, fatigue, weakened immune system, mood changes.

3. Radiation Therapy

- Purpose: To target and kill cancer cells in a specific area.
- Common Side Effects: Skin irritation, fatigue, localized pain.

4. Hormone Therapy

- Purpose: To block hormones that help cancer grow.
- Common Side Effects: Hot flashes, mood swings, bone thinning.

5. Immunotherapy

- Purpose: To help the immune system fight cancer.
- Common Side Effects: Fatigue, flu-like symptoms.



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Understanding what your loved one is going through can help you provide better support during treatment.



important tip

The most important thing you can do is be there. Your presence is more valuable than any words.

How to Offer Emotional Support

Emotional support is just as important as physical help. Here's how to provide meaningful emotional support:

Tips for Emotional Support:

- Be present and available. Sometimes just sitting quietly together is enough.
 - Listen more than you talk. Avoid giving unsolicited advice.
 - Respect their emotions. Let them cry, be angry, or express fear without trying to fix it.
 - Avoid toxic positivity. It's okay to acknowledge that this is hard. Don't say things like, "Stay positive" if it feels dismissive.
 - Check in regularly. A simple "I'm thinking of you" message can mean a lot.
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Practical Ways to Help

Practical support can ease the burden for someone going through treatment. Here are some ideas:

1. • Meals: Organize a meal train or prepare freezer-friendly meals.
2. • Transportation: Offer rides to and from doctor's appointments.
3. • Household chores: Help with cleaning, laundry, yard work, etc.
4. • Childcare: Offer to watch children during treatments or recovery periods.
5. • Errands: Run errands like grocery shopping or pharmacy pickups.



Be specific when offering your help. Instead of saying, “Let me know if you need anything,” say, “Can I bring dinner on Tuesday?” And be sure to respect boundaries. Some people may want more independence, while others appreciate more hands-on help.

“Supporting someone with cancer is a marathon, not a sprint. Taking care of yourself helps you better support your loved one.

Taking Care of Yourself as a Caregiver

Supporting a loved one through cancer can be emotionally and physically draining. It's important to take care of yourself, too.

Tips for Caregivers:

- Acknowledge your emotions. It's okay to feel overwhelmed, sad, or scared.
- Take breaks when needed. You can't pour from an empty cup.
- Join support groups. Find a local or online support group for caregivers.
- Know your limits. It's okay to say no if you're feeling overwhelmed.

Encourage Self-Care:

- Eat well, get enough sleep, and exercise.
- Talk to someone you trust about your feelings.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help from other family members or friends.



Looking to Pay it Forward?

Help send a care package to a breast cancer patient! A Model Patient is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to serving women around the country who are facing breast cancer. It was founded by Tara Darby Rasheta as she was facing her own breast cancer battle at the age of thirty-five. The outpouring of love and support she received from her community inspired her to start this charity. We reach women in need nationwide through thoughtful care packages.

Our inventory is built entirely through donations, financial contributions and fundraising efforts. Donations can be made by check, Venmo, or Paypal. Our EIN number is 83-1050486.



Thank you!

Donations can be made at
amodelpatient.org/fundraising

No amount is too small!



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www.amodelpatient.org
