

# Tips on How to Be Your Own Advocate

- Use your **Bag It** *My Companion Guidebook* to stay organized, track your own information, and as a handy source for reliable resources.
- Assemble and work closely with all the members of your healthcare team who have your best interests in mind. (see healthcare team definitions on page 4)
- Educate yourself about your specific cancer so you can make informed decisions about your treatment and care. (see Questions to ask your healthcare team on page 10)
- Visit only reliable websites for cancer information. (see Resources section of *My Companion Guidebook*)
- Thoroughly understand your health insurance policy.
- Request copies of all of your medical records and test results to store in *My Companion Guidebook*. You can refer back to them and provide as a back-up copy in case they get lost.
- Ask lots of questions – about your cancer diagnosis, treatment options, possible side effects, and available resources for yourself and your loved ones. (see questions to ask your healthcare team on pages 10 and 21)
- Bring someone with you to every appointment and let them know how they can help you.
- Use the *My Appointments Summary Log* found in *My Companion Guidebook* to write down your questions in advance of appointments. Make sure you fully understand the answers provided and take notes.
- Take an active role in managing your care. Consider getting a second opinion.
- Express fully and honestly what you need and want—to your healthcare team, caregivers, family members, and friends.
- Keep your healthcare team updated on any changes in your health. Fully and promptly report symptoms and side effects during and after treatment.
- When challenges arise, problem solve and negotiate to achieve your goals and ensure you have the best care and support you need.
- Ask others for help. Having a loved one or friend advocate on your behalf is a form of self-advocacy.