

Tips for Self-Advocacy

Get Informed

- Learn from reputable sources so you can speak knowledgeably and make sound decisions about your cancer care.
- Ask the right questions about your cancer, goals of care, the benefits, risks and side effects of treatment options.
- Understand your health insurance coverage and the cost of your care.
- Stay informed along the way.

Get Organized

- Get copies of your medical records.
- Use *My Companion Guidebook* to record, store and track your medical info and schedules. Bring it to your appointments.
- Prepare for doctor visits. Write your questions and info to share. Bring someone with you (in person or virtually) to help.

Know Yourself

- What is important to you?
- What are your goals of cancer treatment?
- What are your personal hopes, strengths, needs, concerns, and preferences?
- What help do you need?
- Listen to your body.

Speak Up

- Confidently, directly yet kindly, and honestly.
- Ask questions until you fully understand the answers.
- Voice concerns until you are understood.
- Report changes in your physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.
- Know how to ask for the help you want, and accept the help offered.

Build Your Team

- Find a cancer care team that is a good fit for you and where you can receive the best quality care possible.
- Add support to lean on: family, friends, neighbors, groups in your area.
- Connect with others living with cancer. Try a support group, peer mentor, or an online community.

Know Your Rights and Protections

Under federal, state and local laws:

- As a patient or caregiver.
- On the job.
- For health and disability insurance.
- For benefit(s) eligibility (public/employer).
- Related to your finances.
- For estate planning.

Take Action

- Get involved. Be an active member of your healthcare team.
- Ask your doctor for supportive/palliative care.
- Create advance directives no matter your prognosis.
- Look into financial resource to help with medical and non-medical expenses.
- Tap into resources offered for every aspect of cancer.
- Plan for "what if" scenarios.

Decision Making and Problem Solving

- Work with your healthcare team to make informed choices about your care.
- Consider getting a second opinion.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate.
- Find solutions and negotiate to overcome challenges. Be persistent and follow up.
- Ask for input and help from trusted sources along the way.