

CAREGIVING TIPS

- Flexibility is the key to adapting to the changes that will continue to occur during the acute and chronic phases of this disease. For example, your loved one may suddenly not like the taste of their favorite food, or may not be as physically capable as they once were.
- Take action now, not later. Plan ahead for potential issues that may arise, such as organizing in-home care or keeping all medications organized and ready to go.
- Learn as much as you can about the disease. This will help you learn what to expect, and how to better navigate any challenges that may arise.
- Realize that you are more than a caregiver. Your identity as a wife, husband, parent, friend, or child may feel eclipsed by caregiving, and it's important to retain parts of your pre-diagnosis role.
- When things get tough, think about giving care as you would want to receive it.
- Help your loved one look good. Looking good can improve how your loved one views him or herself. This can be as simple as a haircut or a new shirt.
- Perfection is unrealistic. Recognize the daily value of what you accomplished.
- It's okay to argue. The roles of caregiver and spouse often conflict, which can be frustrating in tougher times. Think of your loved one's illness as a third party, and as something you both can be angry at.
- Lower your expectations. If you have multiple roles in a family—parent, spouse, sibling—adding “caregiver” can be difficult. Accept that you cannot be everything to everybody all the time, and carve out a small piece of special time to devote to each relationship.
- Are you part of the “sandwich generation,” where you care for your children and simultaneously care for your parent with mesothelioma? Set boundaries, maintain open communication, practice self-care, and set up group e-mails or texts to update family all at once. You're only one person, and accepting help and delegating tasks is key.
- Make a “wish list,” and pull it out when family and friends ask how they can help you.
- Inspect your home and adapt it to your loved one's needs. Ensure a cellphone or cordless phone is in their reach, install grab bars in the bathroom if necessary, and purchase nightlights.
- Some assistive devices are covered through insurance. Make an appointment with the outpatient oncology social worker to assist their aid in obtaining services and equipment that may be covered.
- Recognize the importance of dignity. If your loved one loses their ability to perform certain tasks, ensure their privacy, give choices, encourage independence, and intervene when necessary.
- Put on some tunes in the morning. Music can help with emotional release if you don't feel like talking to another person.
- Make it a goal to talk to at least one family member or friend each day for 5 minutes.
- You are in charge of your life. Caregiving is a hard job, and you deserve to make the time to take care of yourself.