

Caregiver Burnout

What is caregiver burnout?

Caregiver burnout is a normal response to caring for a loved one who is sick. The effects of burnout are similar to feeling depressed.

Taking care of a person who has cancer takes time, work, and effort. Caregivers often forget to take care of their own physical and emotional health. In fact, studies show more than 50% of caregivers experience burnout.

What are signs of caregiver burnout?

People feel burnout differently, but it often has physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects:

- A feeling that something bad is going to happen
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Hard time concentrating
- Hard time making decisions or problem solving
- Headaches
- Feeling tense
- Sleep problems
- Shaking or trembling
- Feelings of sadness or grief

It is important to know about caregiver burnout so you can recognize any signs. The more you know, the better you will be able to care for yourself and your loved one with cancer.

What can I do?

You can take steps to relieve stress related to caregiver burnout. Here are some tips:

- Ask for help. Family members, friends, and neighbors may be able to step in.
- Let someone else take over duties when they offer so you get a break.
- Talk it out. Consider meeting with a social worker or support group.
- Let yourself grieve—to cry, to feel numb, to be angry, or to feel however you are feeling.
- Pay attention to your health. Eat well, exercise, and get enough rest.
- Take things one day at a time. Understand you will have good days and bad days.
- Educate yourself. Knowing all you can about your loved one's cancer may help you feel more in control and help you set realistic expectations.

Huntsman Cancer Institute's Patient and Family Support social workers can help people experiencing caregiver burnout. To learn more or make an appointment, call 801-213-5699.

The Linda B. and Robert B. Wiggins Wellness and Integrative Health Center offers classes and services for caregivers, including art, acupuncture, cooking, massage, group fitness classes, and meditation. For more information, call 801-587-4585.