



OVARIAN CANCER: TAKING CARE OF YOU

A Care Partner Resource



What have you done to take care of yourself today?

Your ability to help is impacted by how you feel. This resource will help you understand why taking care of yourself is an important piece of the puzzle, how to recognize signs of stress, and what to do about it.

A CARE PARTNER IS

- A companion, a helper, and a sounding board
- Someone who helps with physical or emotional support
- An essential member of the care team
- **You**



THE ROLE OF A CARE PARTNER

Being a care partner for a person with ovarian cancer can mean many different things. What they need from you may depend on where they are in their treatment and how they are feeling physically and emotionally.

Additionally, their needs may change over time. One day they may need someone to accompany them to the doctor. They may need someone to pick up a few groceries. Or they may simply need someone to talk to.

RECOGNIZING CARE PARTNER FATIGUE

It feels nice to be able help someone you care about, but that doesn't mean it is always easy. Care partners can experience stress related to their role. Care partner fatigue, the long-term effect of that stress, can be easy to overlook.

Signs of care partner fatigue include:

- Changes in sleep such as sleeping too much or too little
- Feeling worried or overwhelmed constantly
- Changes in eating habits
- Losing interest in activities that used to bring joy
- Feeling sad or depressed regularly
- Frequent headaches
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs, including prescription medication
- Delaying personal health needs

If you believe you may have depression, seek professional help.

Sound familiar? You are not alone. Care partner fatigue is common.

Your risks increase if you already have depression, live with the person you care for, are socially isolated, have financial difficulties, and/or have provided care for an extended period of time. The good news is that there are many ways to prevent and address care partner fatigue.

OTHER WORDS YOU MAY HEAR TO DESCRIBE CARE PARTNER FATIGUE INCLUDE CAREGIVER STRESS AND BURNOUT.

Now that you know the symptoms to look out for, read on to begin to create your plan to take care of yourself.

PREVENTING CARE PARTNER FATIGUE

What can you do to prevent care partner fatigue in the first place? Start by remembering that you have needs too. It is not selfish to also take care of yourself. You will be a more effective care partner if you are healthy both physically and emotionally.



Make sure you take care of your own health by scheduling your routine doctors' visits.

Make sure you are getting enough rest, eating healthy foods, and getting regular physical activity. Now is a great time to start making a plan to take care of yourself.



Plan regular activities that are just for you.

Perhaps it is getting coffee with a friend, getting exercise at the gym, or taking a hike outside. Listen to music that makes you feel happy or calm. Join a club or peer group that interests you.



Add mindfulness to your routine with breathing exercises or daily walks.

Mindfulness is not only a spiritual practice, but one designed to train the mind. Many conditions can be positively impacted through the practice of mindfulness such as mindful breathing or walking.



Get outside.

Spending time in nature can help you think more clearly. Stop. Breathe. Listen. Take a little bit of time to sit and enjoy. Think about ways you could integrate more time outside into your day.

IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE CARE PARTNER FATIGUE

First, take a deep breath. Remember that care partner fatigue is common. Start by giving yourself permission to experience the full range of emotions. You have the power to choose how you respond and address how you feel.

This short list may give you some ideas. Which ones could you consider trying? What else could you add to this list?



Take a break.

Schedule regular breaks so you have something to look forward to.



Talk to someone.

Being surrounded by people with a similar experience can help you process how you feel, provide an outlet for your emotions, and also give you new ideas for addressing issues commonly experienced by care partners.



Seek help. Accept help when it is offered.

Consider ways to reach out to your support network to ask for help on things that will be simple for them to do, but will give you time and energy to spend elsewhere.

Plan activities.

Think about activities that bring you joy. You may have put off these activities lately. Make a plan to do something fun for yourself.



Physical activity.

Regular exercise has many benefits, including improving your mood. Whether you go for a walk, play tennis, work in the garden, or do another physical activity you enjoy, consider adding exercise to your routine.



Make a plan.

Having a specific plan to take care of yourself may make you more likely to actually do it.

MAKE A PLAN

3. Finally, think about your personal health.

Make sure you have appointments for yourself to visit the doctor, dentist, and any specialists you see.

My next visit to the doctor is:

My next visit to the dentist is:

My next haircut is:

I can work toward a healthier me by:

Other appointments I have are:



FOR MORE SUPPORT FOR CARE PARTNERS, VISIT:

- Our Way Forward | ourwayforward.com
- National Alliance for Caregiving | caregiving.org
- National Ovarian Cancer Coalition | ovarian.org
- Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance | ocrahope.org
- Cancer Support Community's MyLifeLine.org | mylifeline.org
- Sharsheret | sharsheret.org

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About Our Way Forward

Our Way Forward is a call-to-action that encourages people living with gynecologic cancers, such as ovarian and endometrial cancer, their loved ones, and healthcare providers to rethink how they talk about these cancers. The program provides ways to learn from each other's cancer experiences and to help navigate the physical and emotional challenges that these diseases bring. For more information, visit ourwayforward.com, and follow us on Instagram ([@ourwayforward_gsk](https://www.instagram.com/ourwayforward_gsk)).

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