

In The Spirit of Health

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD Anderson
Cancer Center
Making Cancer History®

"I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you." - 3 John 1:2

Caregivers: Take care of yourselves this holiday season



Life as a caregiver can be difficult at times, especially around the holidays. It's easy to put your own needs to the side as you make sure the person you are caring for has everything they need.

Here are four things MD Anderson Senior Social Work Counselor Paige Falcon suggests to help you take care of yourself during the holiday season.

Get organized.

As schedules fill up, use various tools like planners or notebooks to stay on top of your loved one's care including appointments, medications, treatments and more. "These can help lower your stress levels because you know you'll be able to stay on schedule and access everything you need," says Falcon.

Add new self-care activities to your routine.

Try to take care of yourself first. Incorporate exercising, healthy eating and any other self-care activities that you like to do in your routine. "It could be stretching, meditation, journaling or even making sure you take a shower — whatever helps you feel the most grounded," says Falcon.

Apply for financial aid if you need it.

Financial aid may be available to help with things like transportation, housing, food and gas while receiving treatment. Every little bit helps, especially when those extra holiday expenses come. If your loved one is receiving care at MD Anderson, speak with your social work counselors about it. "We can't directly assist you in filling out government forms, but we can send you the links and tell you where to find additional information," Falcon noted.

Connect with other cancer caregivers.

It's good to connect and talk with other caregivers who may be going through a similar experience. "Support groups are a great place to get your feelings validated and learn that your experiences are normal," says Falcon.

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Paige Falcon, Senior social work counselor

5 tips for a healthier holiday



The holidays are all about relaxing, having fun and spending time with loved ones and friends. But it's important to make sure you are staying healthy and active during the holiday break, especially if you are a caregiver. Here are some tips to help you have a healthier holiday.

1 Don't skip meals.

It's easy to get caught up in making sure your loved one undergoing treatment is eating, but as a caregiver, you must make sure you are eating as well. Eat consistently throughout the day to avoid consuming extra calories.

2 Get up and move in the morning.

Schedule your exercise in the morning so you don't have to interrupt your holiday or caregiving plans later in the day. Try to do at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise each week.

3 Drink more water.

Staying hydrated can boost your energy level. Try drinking a glass of water before your first cup of coffee in the morning. Drinking water before, during and after meals can also keep you from overeating.

4 Try healthier versions of your favorite holiday foods.

When cooking holiday meals try to incorporate healthier options for your side dishes. For example, use turkey breast in your greens instead of ham hocks. Leave out full fat cheeses and milk from your macaroni and cheese and instead use reduced fat cheeses and reduced fat or nonfat milk.

5 Listen to your body.

Pay attention to the signals your body is giving you, it will tell you what you need. After all, as a caregiver you can't show up for anyone else if you can't show up for yourself first. Take your time and aim for a balance of healthy foods throughout the day.

Faith without works is dead - James 2:14

MD Anderson offers several resources to help caregivers including support groups and counseling services.

Scan the QR code for the resource guide for caregivers.



If you have questions about In the Spirit of Health, e-mail Community@MDAnderson.org or call **713-792-3363**.

