

## 50 Ways Friends and Family Can Help Cancer Patients

When a person first gets a cancer diagnosis, they're often so overwhelmed they have no idea how to ask for help or what to ask for—but they sure need it. If you have a friend or family member with cancer, you want to help. So, don't make the mistake of making a vague, questionably sincere offer like "well, call me when you need me!" (They won't).

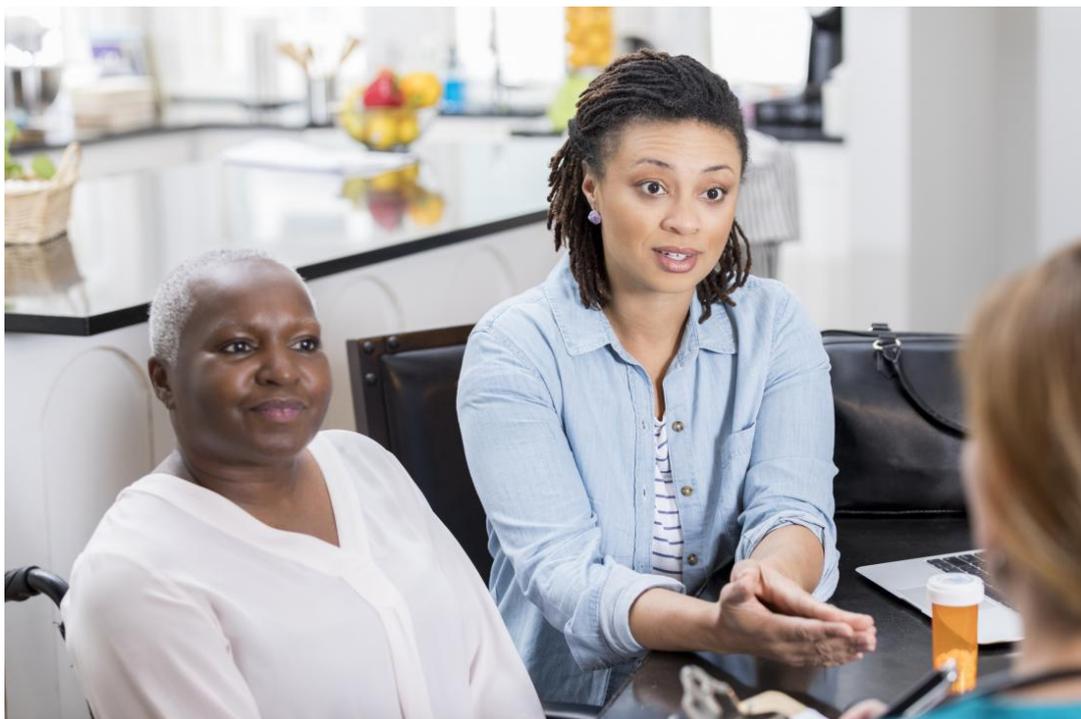
Instead, make your friend or family member's life easier by anticipating their needs and giving physical, much-needed support.



Below is a collection of favors people did for us and suggestions from our community and cancer websites:

1. If you're a close friend or family member to the cancer patient, offer to be a "point person" where you screen and accept/decline others' visits and help offers. Right after a diagnosis, many want to help and visit and call. But the person with cancer is probably extremely overwhelmed at this time and may prefer some rest and space.

2. Offer to be the "communication person" who updates others about your friend's state of health because it can get difficult for the patient to share the details repeatedly.
3. Offer to create and manage a schedule for your friend: for meal deliveries, rides to chemo, visits from friends, etc
4. Understand that a cancer patient is probably too overwhelmed to ask what they need. Instead, take the initiative by offering specifics. For example, instead of saying, "Let me know if there's anything I can do for you." say, "Can I make dinner and deliver it to you on Tuesday?"
5. Deliver a meal. Make sure to ask your friend in advance if there are any dietary restrictions or they are following any guidelines. Then, stay for a visit, or just drop off the food if they're not up for it (a cooler left outside the front door is perfect for this).
6. Deliver several pre-made meals in plastic containers so your friend can heat them up as needed and dispose of the container.
7. You may already know, or you can ask if your friend misses enjoying meals at a favorite restaurant. You probably know what kinds of food they like. So, pick out a nice dinner and have it delivered.
8. Offer to take/accompany them to doctor's visits, chemo, radiation, or the hospital. Sitting in a waiting room by yourself can be very boring and lonely.



9. Offer to take notes for them when the doctor/nurse is talking. Often the brain stops when a white coat walks into the examination room.
10. Help them write down the questions they want to ask their doctor. Without notes, it is easy to forget everything.
11. You can arrange to give them a ride on a regular basis or on certain days.
12. Give an Uber or Lyft gift certificate if you're not available to give your friend a ride.
13. Buy a monthly parking pass for family members when your friend has a prolonged hospitalization—hospital parking gets expensive!
14. Does your friend have kids? Offer to babysit, do a school pick-up, or have them over for a sleepover. It will let your friend rest.



15. Send gift cards to restaurants, grocery stores, and the pharmacy. They are appreciated as there are so many expenses that are not covered.
16. Send a quick email, text, card, or message saying you're thinking of them.
17. Add "no need to respond" to the end of your message - they'll appreciate hearing from you without feeling the need to do anything in return.
18. Add "feel free to take me up on this offer whenever" when you offer help. Then, your friend will know your offer will still be there whenever they need it (in a week, a month, a year).
19. Set a calendar alert reminding you to regularly check in with a quick hello or offer of help.
20. Send a text to your friend the next time you are planning to go to the grocery store. Ask if you can pick anything up. You can even offer to stop on your way to the store and pick up their list.
21. Call or send a text the next time you're at the drugstore/pharmacy to see if they need any toiletries or a prescription picked up.
22. Arrange for a visit by a maid or cleaning service. Check if any special arrangements need to be made, such as securing a pet. Also, offer to come by

and help organize before they come to maximize the benefit. There is a charity that provides free house cleaning for breast cancer patients. Here is the link: [cleaningforareason.org/](https://cleaningforareason.org/)

23. Offer to do the laundry, do the dishes, load or empty the dishwasher.
24. Does your friend have a dog? Offer to walk, feed or take the dog to the groomer.
25. Send a gift certificate for an at-home massage.
26. Offer to visit, but make sure your friend is feeling up to it.
27. It is easy to feel disconnected when your life revolves around medical appointments. So, share the latest information about what is happening with family, office, neighbors, and church or social group members
28. Offer to take them out for a coffee or lunch date.



29. Rent a movie, offer to watch their favorite TV show together, or create a playlist of their favorite music.
30. Let them know you're "on-call" for emergencies. Mean it!
31. Send a flower delivery. Just make sure your friend isn't on neutropenic precautions first; fresh flowers can be an infection risk for cancer patients with

weakened immune systems. Sadly, Peggie had to give away the many beautiful flower deliveries she received right after her diagnosis. Instead, consider silk flowers (no worries about causing infection, and they last longer). Also, cancer patients appreciate live plants (flower arrangements die! Enough said).

32. Give a magazine or newspaper subscription. A good book is also appreciated.
33. Tell your friend you love them. Even if they don't have the energy to respond, your message means a lot.
34. For your female cancer friend or family member, take her out to a relaxing beauty treatment. Think manicure, pedicure, facial, makeup application, etc. It may be the first time she's splurged on her appearance in a while. Check if this is permitted. If your friend is on chemotherapy, this may not be recommended.
35. Send a card. Make sure it's legible—cancer eyes are tired eyes :-)



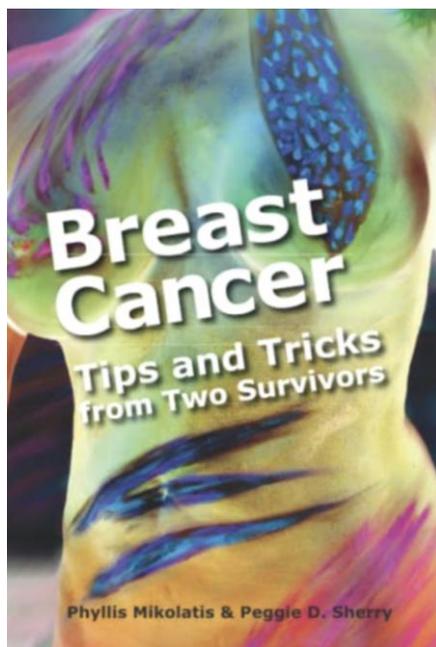
36. Don't ask for all the details about the current state of your friend's health every time you visit or call.
37. Ask the patient or caregiver to assign a task to you. After performing the task, leave unless requested to stay. Your friend may be too tired for socialization.
38. Does your friend have a garden or house plants that need care? Offer to come by and do some watering and maintenance. Even better, commit to taking

over the watering regularly. You can also offer to trim the hedges or mow the lawn.

39. If they have shared their diagnosis, leave heartfelt, uplifting messages on their Facebook page or other social media. Text or email a funny message, video, or photo.
40. Send funny jokes or buy funny movies for them to enjoy. Laughter is great medicine.
41. If you can and if your friend feels comfortable accepting it, give some cash or a financial gift card. Cancer can be a huge financial hit between hospital bills, copays, parking fees, and income loss, especially if one can't work.
42. If your company offers it, donate hours to cover time off when their paid time expires. You can also donate airline miles for medical travel.
43. If they are receiving chemotherapy, offer to take them shopping for a wig or scarves and caps. In addition, you can also give them a hat or scarf.
44. Leave little gifts on their doorstep or in their mailbox.
45. Give a super comfy blanket (good for couch lounging or trips to chemo).
46. Just listen. Don't give advice, don't try to be cheery—just listen and let your friend talk.
47. Please don't cry in front of them. It's hard for cancer patients to keep their composure in front of their families. "I can't comfort you when I am the one facing cancer."
48. Ask what they need from you most right now... and then do it. Cancer isn't contagious—give your friend a hug to let them know you're on their side.
49. Congratulate them when they share the good news. Keep the success-conversation about the patient.
50. Remember to still be there a few months after the diagnosis, when it's not so new anymore. The fanfare will have died down, but your friend will still be struggling and needing logistical and emotional help.

**Lesson:** There are many things you can do. Just make sure you keep your commitments. Your friends and their loved ones will be counting on you to come through.

This blog is published with the permission of Peggie Sherry, co-author of Breast Cancer, Tips and Tricks from Two Survivors. To support their work, you can purchase a copy of their book [here](#). Proceeds from the book sales support [Faces of Courage](#) a cancer patient support non-profit organization dedicated to providing, free of charge, programs emphasizing practical education; life coping strategies; and improved self-esteem; through non-threatening, engaging, and recreational outings and overnight camps.



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*Now you can download our free mobile app for cancer patients in the **Apple** and **Android** stores. Its free, zero ads!*



*My CareCrew's mission is to make the Cancer journey a little more bearable. We offer products and services that have been specially designed and curated to meet the needs of cancer patients, caregivers, and their loved ones. These include **Chemo treatment shirts**, **Cancer patient treatment organizer**, **Juice beauty USDA organic treatment oil**, and **Skin cancer treatment cream** that make the cancer journey a little more bearable!*

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