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♥CVS specialty nurse care management
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Care ConnectionsSM

Sharing the
knowledge for
better health

MAY 2022

Building your care team

Good care starts with building a strong care team. Different providers have different roles. Do you know what each one does for you? Knowing can help you get better care.

Your **primary care physician (PCP)** sees your whole health picture. Your PCP may manage your disease, provide wellness care, or order labs and screenings. Ask your other providers to send copies of your records and test results to your PCP. Also ask your doctor if they offer an online health record or portal. This can help you track details about your health. Often, this can be accessed through your doctor’s website or an app.

Your **specialist** is a doctor who has special training in one or more fields of medicine. You may need one or more specialists who are experts in your long-term illness.

Your **pharmacist** can answer many questions about your medicine. They can also help with home delivery, or make sure you don’t miss a dose over holidays or when travelling. Stick with one pharmacy so they can track your treatment history. This can prevent problems for those taking more than one medicine.

Your **program nurse** can help tie things together with you and your care team. Your nurse can answer questions about your health or treatment plan. They can also find local resources for you.

Others involved in your care are often friends, family, neighbors, or support groups. We call these people caregivers. It’s important to make sure you know how to reach each person on your care team.



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Do you need a caregiver?

Sometimes, living with a long-term illness calls for extra care. A caregiver can be a big help. This person may be a spouse, parent, friend, or a hired helper. Their role is to fill the gaps in your care.

Caregivers can help in many ways. They can help you take and organize your medicines. They can support you with therapy exercises. They can also help with daily care. This may mean help with bathing, dressing, paying bills, or cooking. They may also drive you to the doctor, to therapy, or to the grocery store. Caregivers are there to support you when you need it most.

Think about the types of care you need. It is important to be clear about these needs with your caregiver. Here’s how you can make the most out of working with a caregiver:

- Be honest about what you need or want. Talk openly about your concerns, questions, and preferences. You’re still in charge of your care.
- Keep track of your treatment plan and schedule. Each person on your care team should have a copy, including your caregiver. This also includes your doctors and program nurse.
- Help your caregiver learn about your illness. Share any tools you have, like books or websites. The more your caregiver knows, the more they can help.
- Take your caregiver with you to doctor visits. Both of you can ask questions. Then ask your caregiver to write down what the doctor says. That way you can learn together about your care and doctor’s instructions.

Caring for your caregiver

Caregivers are great, but they are still human. They may need support from you too. Studies show that caregivers can display different signs of stress over time. These signs include weight gain, weight loss, frequent colds, poor sleep, or trouble focusing.

You can help lower your caregiver’s stress by making sure they care for themselves. Ask them about their own goals and interests. Caregivers can feel guilty about taking time off. Let them know it’s okay to have a life outside of their duties. You can also suggest they join a support group. Talking to others who are also taking care of loved ones can be a good outlet and resource.

You can also talk to them about respite care. Regular breaks can help caregivers. Many programs offer some sort of respite care. In-home visits can offer a caregiver a few hours or nightly relief. Or, stays at a medical facility, like an assisted living center, can offer all-day relief. Your program nurse can help you find these resources.

Help from our resource specialists

As you know, it’s harder to focus on your health when your basic needs are not being met. And the basics like food, housing and medicine seem to cost more every day. For many of us, this makes it tough to plan ahead, causing stress and worry.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added more worries with supply shortages and waiting lists. Many have lost jobs and are struggling to pay bills. Some have faced losing their homes. If you’ve had any of these types of struggles lately, you’re not alone.

The good news—there are many ways to get help. Several national, state, and local programs exist. These programs can provide financial counseling and help with:

- Medicine, lab work, or dental care
- Medical equipment
- Rent, mortgage, or utilities
- Health insurance

How do you find out more about such programs? How do you know if you qualify? Our resource specialists can provide more details and tell you about other services like:

- Food delivery or drive-through food pantries in your area
- Rides to doctor visits
- In-home care (including respite)
- Social Security
- Medicare and Medicaid—how to apply
- Long-term planning

Here are some resources you can call that may prove useful:

- U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD):
1-800-569-4287
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau:
1-855-411-2372

How to connect with a resource specialist

First, reach out to your program nurse about your issues. Your nurse will arrange for a resource specialist to call you. The specialist will call and ask for more details. They’ll want to know things like the number of people in your household, your income, and other assets. Access to certain programs may depend on those factors.

Your resource specialist will then search for services you can use. It will be up to you to contact the resources they find. But they can provide tips to help you apply for services. And you’ll receive regular follow-up calls to check on how you’re doing.