

Finance Checklist for Cancer Patients and Caregivers

If you're worried about keeping up with bills during treatment, you're not alone. Up to **73% of cancer patients** experience financial hardship during cancer.¹ Talking about finances with someone at your care center can help you find the right resources for your family.

Before Your Appointment

- Review your insurance.** Check your policy or call your insurance company to confirm your deductible, which is how much you will pay before your insurance starts covering costs. Find out if your providers and services are in-network. If they are out-of-network, ask what percentage your insurance will cover and which expenses will count towards your deductible and out-of-pocket maximum.
- Set up prior authorization.** Ask your doctor to obtain prior authorization from your insurance company so they will cover certain treatment-related costs.
- Tally up your expenses.** Use [Family Reach's Expense Sheet](#) or a similar budgeting system to keep track of your treatment-related costs and living expenses. Be sure to include some fun purchases to take your mind off treatment.
- Consider who you feel most comfortable with.** You can talk to anyone on your care team about financial concerns. If your doctor, nurse, or social worker doesn't have the answers, you can ask them to connect you with someone else for more guidance.

During Your Appointment

- Be honest.** When you share your financial concerns, it helps your care team connect you to helpful resources. You could say: "I'm worried about missing work and being able to pay my bills."
- Ask about available resources.** Care centers generally have a financial counseling office or patient resource department that can help you with payment plans, government assistance programs, and more.
- Ask about treatment options.** Your care team may be able to recommend more affordable — and still effective — treatment options. For example, some medications are covered by a Patient Assistance Program (PAP) and there may be generic versions that will cost you less at the pharmacy.
- Discuss your transportation costs.** Find out if your care center offers free parking passes, taxi vouchers, or other transportation discounts to help you save money on travel costs.
- Talk about scheduling.** Your treatment center may be able to schedule appointments on the same day so you can cut down on time off from work and save on travel costs.

After Your Appointment

- Call, email, or write down questions before your next appointment.** A notebook, binder, [Manta Cares Planner](#), or smartphone app can help you stay organized — and it's always okay to ask someone to repeat or clarify information.
- Keep tallying your expenses.** Tracking your spending will help you follow a budget and identify costs that could be covered by available resources.

Scan the code for more tips!



Get financial help: familyreach.org



1. Thomas G. Knight, Melissa Aguiar, Myra Robinson, Allison Martin, Tommy Chen, Rupali Bose, Jing Ai, Brittany K. Ragon, Aleksander L. Chojecki, Nilay A. Shah, Srinivasa R. Sanikommu, James Symanowski, Edward A. Copelan, Michael R. Grunwald; Financial Toxicity Intervention Decreases Mortality in High Risk Hematologic Malignancy Patients. *Blood* 2020; 136 (Supplement 1): 14–15. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1182/blood-2020-137222>

5 Steps for Talking to Cancer Patients and Caregivers About Money

As an oncology care professional, you can normalize financial distress during cancer treatment and connect patients and caregivers to helpful resources. One conversation could make all the difference for a family in need.

1

Create a safe space. It can take a lot of strength for someone to admit they need financial help. Ask questions, listen carefully, and validate their concerns. Normalize financial hardship — 1 in 3 families struggles to afford basic needs while in cancer treatment,¹ and it isn't because they're doing anything wrong.

2

Empower families with information. Patients and caregivers often don't have a complete understanding of treatment costs, insurance coverage, and available financial resources. You can bring these topics to their attention so they're aware of their financial options and feel empowered to make decisions about their care.

3

Ask open-ended questions to initiate conversations about costs. Take the pressure off of patients and caregivers by bringing up finances and getting comfortable with discomfort. This will build trust and normalize these difficult conversations. Even if families are slow to open up, you may be able to read between the lines of their responses to identify a source of financial distress.

Examples of questions to ask:

- How many days of work have you missed since diagnosis?
- How long does it take you to get to the treatment center?
- What bills are the most stressful this month?
- Who is in your support network?
- What concerns do you have about your utility costs?
- What else should I know to better support you with your finances?

5 Steps for Talking to Cancer Patients and Caregivers About Money *(Continued)*

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4

Make it a team effort. Working finances into your conversations with patients and caregivers is important, but it's not all on your shoulders! Help patients solidify their support system at the care center and beyond through cancer support groups, religious groups, financial counselors, and so on.

5

Be transparent about how you can help. You don't need all the answers to start conversations about costs with patients or caregivers. What matters most is that you're willing to have these discussions so that families don't have to face the financial journey of cancer alone. It also helps to have a list of resources that you can guide families to for more support, especially in areas that you're unable to help with.



We can only help if patients are open with us about their financial hardship. **This is why we ask, even when the conversations are difficult.**

Usually, patients share that they're glad they told us because we're able to remove a financial barrier to accessing the care they need.

— *Social workers at
Cooley Dickinson Hospital*

Escanee el código para ver más consejos!

