



# Supporting Your Family as You Manage Your Health

*Learning of a serious medical condition can leave people feeling worried and confused. Worrying about your family adds even more stress. But you can design a support plan to help you face the challenges ahead.*

Many parents faced with serious medical conditions lead productive lives and raise healthy and well-adjusted children.

Understanding how your condition affects your family will help you set up and manage a plan of support. This will be a big step toward caring for yourself and your child in the best ways possible.

Some days might be more challenging than others. For instance, symptoms might suddenly worsen. Some health care providers refer to these as “flare-ups.” A flare-up might make it difficult for you to focus on your child. It might be difficult for him to understand your lack of attention.

Your parenting behaviors might change based on your emotions. You may be more lenient with the way you typically discipline or find it harder to nurture your child.

## Support system

A strong support system can provide you with help during times of need. Many of your relationships can make up your support system, like your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, or faith-based community members.

It might be difficult for you to add people to your circles of support when you aren't feeling well. However, supportive relationships are important, particularly when facing health concerns.

Some important planning steps to take:

- > **Determine who will care for your child when you are unable to.** If he is old enough, talk to him about how this will work. You may wish to let him choose the person who will care for him. Share your expectations with the caregivers.

- > **Keep emergency numbers handy.** In addition to having them in your phone, write them down, perhaps on the refrigerator or near your bedside.
- > **Inform loved ones of your condition.** Let them know when you are not feeling well and that you may need to call upon them for help soon.
- > **Ask for help.** There are programs and organizations that can help with child care, rides to medical appointments, shopping trips, meal preparation, household duties, or other tasks.
- > **Find out about support groups.** Other parents with similar conditions may give you ideas and tips. Often, peer support groups provide parents with strategies for coping that they might not otherwise learn. Some organizations might offer convenient internet-based support groups or online forums.

*Depending on your condition, you might have multiple medications to take. You might receive specific instructions to rest. You may need to take a leave of absence from work. Following your plan of care as instructed by your health care provider is especially important.*



Take time to think about your family.

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**You want to give your child the love and attention he deserves. Plan times when you can concentrate on him. When this might not be possible, who can help?**

**After receiving a diagnosis, you may have to change your surroundings at home. How might this affect your child?**

**Those around you might have to adapt to accommodate your needs. What might be needed for this transition?**

**It is normal to feel sad because your life is not going as you had planned. What are some ways you can take time for yourself to help you cope?**