

10 TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

“Living Lessons® – A Guide for Caregivers”, developed by the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association and The GlaxoSmithKline Foundation, recommends the following tips for Canadians caring for someone with end-of-life illness. The tips will help caregivers achieve open, honest communication among their loved ones, their doctors and themselves.

1. As caregiver, you are your loved one’s primary advocate on the healthcare team.
2. If you decide to provide care at home, find a doctor who will visit you there.
3. Schedule a triple appointment instead of a single one: the average doctor’s appointment is seven minutes, which may not be enough time to ask and get the answers to all your questions.
4. When making a doctor’s appointment, explain why you need to see the doctor and what you hope to get from the appointment.
5. Make a list of questions you want to ask and identify their priority. Give a copy of this list to your doctor.
6. Arrange for friends or volunteers to attend a doctor’s appointment with the patient if you or other family members cannot. Ask them to prepare questions.
7. As caregiver, you should act as a second pair of ears during the appointments. Take notes so that you can refer to them later.
8. Keep a logbook or journal of all care and treatment. Include in it details of the administration of drugs, appointments, names and numbers of the healthcare team and so on.
9. Remember that as caregiver you may notice changes and symptoms that other members of the healthcare team do not. Communicate these to other members of the team.
10. After appointments, ask for a report or a diagnostic summary if you feel it would be helpful.