



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Tips for Healthy Eating on a Budget

This information can help you make healthy food choices while cutting down on food costs. It has tips for food planning, shopping, and cooking. It also has a list of healthy, low-cost pantry items, a sample meal plan, and recipes.

Healthy food choices help your body get more of the nutrients it needs to work its best. Making sure your body gets enough nutrients helps you feel better overall. It can also help you manage your symptoms and weight during cancer treatment.

For more information about making food choices during cancer treatment, read *Eating Well During Your Cancer Treatment* (www.mskcc.org/pe/eating-cancer-treatment).

Planning

Planning is the key to healthy eating on a budget. You can plan by looking for sales, making a shopping list, and avoiding wasting food.

Look for Sales

- Look for sales on things such as:
 - Fresh produce (fruits and vegetables).
 - Lean proteins, such as poultry and fish. Poultry is meat from birds, such as chicken and turkey.
 - Low-fat dairy items, such as yogurt and skim or 1% milk.
 - Whole grains, such as brown rice, barley, oatmeal, and whole wheat bread.
 - Canned tuna, salmon, and sardines.

- Dried or canned beans.
- Items you use often or that are on your shopping list.
- Make a weekly eating plan based on what's on sale. Plan meals around fresh produce, lean proteins, low-fat dairy items, and other sale items. For example, you could make a simple meal with a lean meat or fish, vegetables, and whole grains. It's also helpful to plan meals that use the same ingredients.
- Stock up on items when they're on sale, especially non-perishable items. Non-perishable items are ones that last a very long time before spoiling. Examples include nut butters, canned beans, canned fish, and pasta.

Tips for Finding Sales

- Check newspapers, store circulars (fliers and ads), and store websites for sales and coupons.
- Download and check apps for sales. Stores that have apps include:
 - Aldi
 - BJ's
 - ShopRite
 - Stop & Shop
 - Walmart
 - Wegmans

Online markets that have apps include:

- Fresh Direct
- Imperfect Foods
- Instacart
- Misfit Market
- Shipt
- Visit different grocery stores in your neighborhood and compare their

prices. There are also apps such as Flipp that can compare prices at deals in stores in your area. Items can cost more at one store than another.

- If you need a certain product, visit the company's website to check for coupons.
- Think about making a weekly habit of checking for sales. You can compare prices and stay aware of sales.

Make a Shopping List

- Make a shopping list based on your weekly eating plan. Stick to your list when you shop.
- Spend most of your food budget on nutrient-rich vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy, lean protein, and whole grains. For more examples, read the section "Low-Cost Items to Build a Healthy Pantry."
- Try to buy produce that's in season. It's flavorful and there's lots of it. It also usually costs less than produce not in season. Visit www.seasonalfoodguide.org to learn what produce is in season in your area.
- If you need to buy produce that is not in season, buy it frozen.
- Avoid items with added sugar or salt. Check the item's ingredient list to see if sugar or salt was added.

Don't Waste Food

- Use highly perishable items early in the week. Highly perishable items are ones that spoil quickly, such as fish and seafood, salad greens, berries, and fresh herbs. Save less perishable items for later in the week. Less perishable items are ones that don't spoil as quickly.
- Have leftovers for lunch.
- Create new meals from leftover ingredients. For example, you can use leftover cooked meat and vegetables as a filling for a casserole, frittata, wrap, or soup.
- Freeze foods or leftovers to use later.

Shopping

Here are some tips for smart, low-cost grocery shopping.

- Do not go food shopping when you're hungry.
- Only buy items on your grocery list. Sticking to your list will help you avoid spending money on things you didn't plan on.
- Choose store brands instead of name brands. They often cost less, and their quality and taste are just as good.
- Avoid pre-prepared items, such as washed or cut vegetables and shredded cheese. Pre-prepared items cost more. It's better to prepare the items yourself if you have time.
- Avoid pre-packaged meals. They often cost more than cooking yourself.
- Buy bulk goods online or from warehouse clubs (such as Sam's Club, Costco, and BJ's). Remember only to buy things you know you'll use before they spoil or expire.
 - Buying in bulk can seem expensive, but it can help you spend less over time. Spending a larger amount all at once means you won't need to keep spending smaller amounts that add up.
- Know how much you're spending. Use a calculator (such as the one on your phone) to keep track of how much you're spending while you shop.
 - In New York, most food items are not taxed. Foods that are taxed include:
 - Heated foods.
 - Ready-made foods, including sandwiches.
 - Carbonated (fizzy) drinks.
 - Candies and sweets.

If you're buying these items, make sure to account for tax.

- Compare the unit price of items. The unit price is the price for a set volume or weight. It's usually listed on the tag below the item on the shelf. Checking

the unit price helps you better compare costs, especially for items that are different sizes.

- Check the clearance shelves for discounted items.
- Skip aisles or sections with soda, chips, cookies, and candy, if you can.
- Avoid buying sugary drinks such as sodas or juices. Drink water at home instead.

If you go to the same store often, sign up for their loyalty or rewards program. You'll get member-only discounts automatically at checkout. Some programs even offer extra benefits, such cash rewards for frequent shoppers.

Cooking

- Use the same ingredients and leftovers for different recipes. For example:
 - Make a double batch of brown rice. Use it the next day too.
 - Chop broccoli for a potato dish. Use the leftovers for a broccoli stir fry.

Low-Cost Items to Build a Healthy Pantry

The items in the section are low-cost and healthy. Think about making them part of your weekly eating plan, especially when you see them on sale.

Proteins	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eggs• Lentils• Tofu• Peanut butter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Canned legumes (such as beans and chickpeas)*• Dry legumes (such as beans, chickpeas, and lentils)*

* Beans and other legumes are less expensive than other sources of protein, such as meat and poultry. Choose dried legumes rather than canned legumes, especially if you have a pressure cooker or slow cooker such as a Crockpot® or Instant Pot®. A bag of dried beans is less expensive and has more servings than a can of beans. Using a pressure cooker or slow cooker lets you cook dried legumes more quickly.

Grains

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tortillas• Pasta• Noodles• All-purpose flour• Whole wheat flour• Oats | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole wheat bread• Cornmeal• White rice• Brown rice |
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Dairy and Non-Dairy Items

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skim or 1% milk• Unsweetened nut milk (such as almond or soy)• Nonfat or 1% plain yogurt | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Soy yogurt• Queso fresco• Cheddar cheese• Mozzarella cheese |
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Canned Vegetables

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Crushed tomatoes• Tomato paste• Asparagus• Spinach | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corn• String beans• Beets• Carrots |
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Non-Starchy Vegetables

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lettuce and other greens• Carrots• Celery• Broccoli | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peppers• Tomatoes• Garlic• Onions |
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Starchy Vegetables

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potatoes• Sweet potatoes• Butternut squash• Acorn squash | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pumpkin squash• Plantains• Taro |
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Fruits

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apples • Bananas • Watermelon • Cantaloupe • Honeydew 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casaba • Oranges • Limes • Lemons
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Frozen Fruits and Vegetables	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berries • Peas • Green beans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corn • Edamame

Pantry Items That Add Flavor	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low sodium soy sauce • Low sodium chili sauce • Coconut milk • Low sodium fish sauce • Low sodium miso paste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sardines • Low sodium anchovies • Olive oil • Wine vinegar

Spices	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garlic powder • Chili flakes • Cumin or cumin seeds • Paprika or smoked paprika 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry oregano • Dry parsley • Mustard seeds or ground mustard

Sample Menus and Recipes

This section includes sample menus and recipes that use low-cost ingredients.

The prices listed are averages. The exact cost of these meals depends on where you buy the ingredients and if they're on sale.

	Sample Menu 1	Sample Menu 2	Sample Menu 3
Breakfast	Veggie Scramble \$1.30 per serving	Apple Cinnamon Oatmeal \$1.03 per serving	Peanut Butter and Banana Toast \$0.34 per serving

Lunch	Loaded Potato with Broccoli and Cheese \$1.52 per serving	Meatless Chili and Brown Rice \$3.45 per serving	Hearty Taco Bowl \$4.32 per serving
Dinner	Creamy Lentil Soup Brown Rice \$0.94 per serving	Green Spanish Frittata \$1.18 per serving	Chicken and Broccoli Stir Fry \$2.72 per serving
Total Cost	\$3.76	\$5.66	\$7.38

The recipes for each of these meals are included below.

Breakfast Recipes

Veggie Scramble

Prep Time	Cook Time	Servings	Total Cost
10 minutes	7 minutes	2	\$2.61

Ingredients

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ small onion • 1 tomato • 1 cup spinach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 eggs • Salt and pepper • 1 tablespoon olive oil or canola oil
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Instructions

1. Chop the onion and tomato into ½ inch pieces. Roughly chop the spinach. Set the vegetables aside while you prepare the rest of the ingredients.
2. Crack the eggs into a bowl. Season them with salt and pepper. Mix well with a fork.
3. Heat the oil in a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat.
4. Add the chopped onion and cook for 3 minutes. Add tomatoes and cook for another 4 minutes while stirring occasionally with a silicone or wooden spatula.
5. Add the spinach and continue cooking for another 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Pour the eggs over the vegetables and gently stir until done. This takes 3 to 5 minutes, depending on how firm you like your eggs cooked.

Serving suggestion: Serve over whole wheat toast.

Nutrition Information

Nutrition is per serving.

Calories	239
Protein	6 g
Total carbohydrates	17 g
Added sugars	0 g
Dietary fiber	2 g
Total fat	17 g
Saturated fat	4 g
Sodium	140 mg

Apple Cinnamon Oatmeal

Prep Time	Cook Time	Servings	Total Cost
5 minutes	10 minutes	2	\$2.06

Ingredients

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 crisp apple, diced• 2 teaspoons unsalted butter or plant-based spread• 2 tablespoons brown sugar• ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 cup quick-cooking oats• 2 cups (16 fluid ounces) skim or 1% milk or non-dairy milk• A pinch of salt
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Instructions

1. Add the diced apple, butter or plant-based spread, brown sugar, and cinnamon to a 1-quart pot over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally with a mixing spoon until the apples are soft (about 3 to 4 minutes).
2. Add the oats, milk or almond milk, and pinch of salt to the pot. Cook while stirring constantly, until the oats are creamy.
3. Serve with ground cinnamon sprinkled on top, if you want to.

Nutrition Information

Nutrition is per serving.

Calories	374
Protein	13 g
Total carbohydrates	61 g
Added sugars	9 g
Dietary fiber	6 g
Total fat	9 g
Saturated fat	4 g
Sodium	175 mg

Peanut Butter and Banana Toast

Prep Time	Cook Time	Servings	Total Cost
5 minutes	2 to 4 minutes	2	\$0.69

Ingredients

- 2 slices whole wheat bread
- 2 tablespoons peanut butter
- 1 banana, sliced

Instructions

1. Toast the bread.
 - If you're using an oven, preheat it to 350 °F (177 °C). Put the bread on a baking sheet and bake it for 4 to 5 minutes. Take out the baking sheet and flip the bread over. Place it back in the oven for another 4 to 5 minutes.
 - If you're using a toaster, toast the bread for 2 to 3 minutes or for as long as you want.
2. Spread the peanut butter over both pieces of toast. Top with banana slices.

Nutrition Information

Nutrition is per serving.

Calories	258
Protein	8 g
Total carbohydrates	30 g
Added sugars	2 g
Dietary fiber	5 g
Total fat	9 g
Saturated fat	1 g
Sodium	182 mg

Lunch Recipes

Loaded Potato with Broccoli and Cheese

Prep Time	Cook Time	Servings	Total Cost
10 minutes	30 minutes	2	\$3.03

Ingredients

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 russet potatoes• 2 tablespoons olive oil• Salt and pepper• 2 cups broccoli florets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 garlic cloves, minced (chopped into small pieces)• ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese• 2 green onions (scallions), chopped
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Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 °F (204° C).
2. Wash and dry the potatoes. Place them on a microwave-safe plate. Prick each one with a fork in 2 to 3 places. Microwave them for 4 minutes.
3. Carefully move the potatoes from the microwave-safe plate to a baking sheet. Bake them for 10 to 15 minutes.
4. While the potatoes are baking, heat a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the broccoli florets, minced garlic, and 2 to 3 tablespoons of water. Mix them together. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes, until the water disappears. Steam will cook the broccoli as the water evaporates.

5. Take the potatoes out of the oven. Cut each one lengthwise in the center and use a fork or spoon to open them. Create a small hole in the potatoes by removing a bit of the potato flesh and setting aside for later.
6. Add 1 tablespoon of olive oil to each potato. You can also add a pinch of salt and pepper, if you want. Mash and lightly mix. Mix the extra potato flesh with the broccoli and place the mixture on top of each potato. Add the shredded cheese. Put them back in the oven until the cheese melts (about 2 minutes).
7. Sprinkle the green onion on top of each potato.

Nutrition Information

Nutrition is per serving (if you used a pinch of salt and pepper).

Calories	383
Protein	10 g
Total carbohydrates	27 g
Added sugars	0 g
Dietary fiber	6 g
Total fat	23 g
Saturated fat	4 g
Sodium	296 mg

Meatless Chili

Prep Time	Cook Time	Servings	Total Cost
20 minutes	30 minutes	6	\$10.37

Ingredients

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 tablespoons olive oil • 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour • 1 small yellow onion, diced • 1 green bell pepper, diced • 2 celery ribs, diced • 3 garlic cloves, minced (chopped into small pieces) • 3 small carrots, thinly sliced • 4 tablespoons mild chili powder • 1 teaspoon ground cumin • 1 teaspoon dried oregano | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ teaspoon sea salt • 1 (15-ounce) can red kidney beans, drained • 1 (15-ounce) can pinto beans, drained • 1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes • ½ cup (4 fluid ounces) water or vegetable broth • Optional toppings: chopped green onions, reduced-fat sour cream, brown rice, spinach |
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Instructions

1. Add the olive oil and all-purpose flour to a large pot over medium heat. Mix them well to make a paste, then cook until the paste is golden brown.
2. Add the onion, bell pepper, celery, garlic, and seasonings (chili powder, cumin, oregano, and salt) to the pot. Mix and cook until the vegetables look soft (about 1 to 2 minutes).
3. Add the beans, tomatoes, and water to the pot. Cover the pot and let it simmer for about 20 minutes.
4. Serve with your choice of toppings.

Store the leftovers in airtight containers in the refrigerator. They will stay fresh for up to 3 days. The leftovers also freeze well, but it's best to eat the frozen leftovers within 3 months.

Nutrition Information

Nutrition is per serving (without toppings).

Calories	283
Protein	12 g
Total carbohydrates	45 g
Added sugars	8 g
Dietary fiber	10 g

Total fat	5 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Sodium	520 mg

Hearty Taco Bowl

Prep Time	Cook Time	Servings	Total Cost
10 minutes	3 minutes	1	\$4.32

Ingredients

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 cups spinach, chopped • 1 cup Meatless Chili (see recipe above) • 2 tablespoons shredded cheddar cheese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 green onion (scallion), chopped • 1 (6-inch) whole wheat tortilla
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Instructions

1. Warm up the chili in the microwave or in a pot on the stove until it's hot. If you're using a microwave, warm it for about 3 minutes. If you're using a stove, warm it for about 5 to 10 minutes.
2. Build the taco bowl by layering the spinach, chili, shredded cheese, and green onion in a soup bowl.
3. Serve with a whole wheat tortilla.

Nutrition Information

Nutrition is per serving.

Calories	442
Protein	20 g
Total carbohydrates	62 g
Added sugars	8 g
Dietary fiber	12 g
Total fat	16 g
Saturated fat	2 g
Sodium	580 mg

Dinner Recipes

Creamy Lentil Soup

Prep Time	Cook Time	Servings	Total Cost
15 minutes	30 minutes	6	\$5.34

Ingredients

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 small carrots or 1 medium sized carrot• 1 small yellow onion• 4 garlic cloves• 1 tablespoon olive oil• 1 teaspoon dry oregano	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Salt and pepper• 1½ cups dry green lentils, rinsed• 4 cups (32 fluid ounces) low-sodium vegetable stock• 3 cups (24 fluid ounces) water
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Instructions

1. Place a box grater on a cutting board. Using a downward motion, scrape the pointed end of the carrot along the large holes of the box grater. Be careful to keep your hands and fingers out of the way. Continue until the carrot is about 2 inches long. Chop the onion into ¼ inch pieces. Mince garlic into small pieces.
2. Add olive oil to a large pot over medium-high heat. Add onion, grated carrots, garlic, oregano, salt and pepper. Mix well. Cook while stirring occasionally for a few minutes to start softening the vegetables.
3. Add the lentils and mix. Add the vegetable stock. Let the soup simmer until the lentils are soft and the soup looks creamy (about 30 minutes).

Nutrition Information

Nutrition is per serving.

Calories	209
Protein	14 g
Total carbohydrates	37 g
Added sugars	0 g
Dietary Fiber	11 g
Total Fat	6 g

Saturated Fat	0 g
Sodium	150 mg

Green Spanish Frittata

Prep Time	Cook Time	Servings	Total Cost
10 minutes	16 minutes	4	\$4.70

Ingredients

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 eggs • ½ teaspoon salt • Ground black pepper (to taste) • 1 teaspoon mild chili powder • 3 tablespoons milk or plain yogurt • 1 tablespoon olive oil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 cups spinach, chopped • 1 onion, sliced • 2 roasted potatoes cut into 1-inch chunks • ¼ cup shredded cheddar cheese
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Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 425 °F (218 °C).
2. Crack the eggs into a large bowl. Add salt, pepper, chili powder, and milk or yogurt. Mix well with a whisk or fork, and set aside.
3. Add the olive oil, spinach, and onion to a 10-inch oven-safe skillet over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes until the onions are golden brown. Add the potatoes and spread them evenly over the skillet with the other vegetables.
4. Pour the egg mixture into the skillet. Sprinkle the cheddar cheese on top. Keep cooking the mixture on the stove top for about 30 seconds to 1 minute.
5. Place the skillet in the preheated oven and bake until the eggs are puffed and appear cooked (about 7 to 14 minutes). The center of the frittata should jiggle a little when you give it a small shake.
6. Take the skillet out of the oven and let it cool.

Serving suggestion: Serve with fresh herbs or a side salad.

Nutrition Information

Nutrition is per serving.

Calories	317
Protein	17 g
Total carbohydrates	15 g
Added sugars	0 g
Dietary fiber	3 g
Total fat	18 g
Saturated fat	5 g
Sodium	433 mg

Chicken and Broccoli Stir-Fry

Prep Time	Cook Time	Servings	Total Cost
5 minutes	15 minutes	2	\$5.44

Ingredients

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ½ medium onion• ½ green bell pepper• 1 boneless, skinless chicken breast (about 6 ounces), cut into cubes• 1 teaspoon garlic powder• Ground black pepper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar• 1½ tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce• 1 teaspoon brown sugar• 1 tablespoon olive oil• 3 cups of broccoli florets
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Instructions

1. Chop onion and pepper into ½ inch pieces.
2. Season the chicken cubes with the garlic powder and ground black pepper.
3. Mix the vinegar, soy sauce, brown sugar, and olive oil in a small bowl. Set aside.
4. Place a large skillet over high heat. Let it warm up for 1 to 2 minutes. Add the chicken cubes and spread them evenly in the skillet. Let it cook for 1 minute on each side, without stirring.
5. Add broccoli to the skillet. Mix well. Add onions and pepper and mix for

another minute or 2.

6. Add the sauce mixture stir for a few minutes. Continue cooking while mixing frequently until the chicken is well done. You should be able to break chicken pieces apart with your spatula or cooking spoon.

You can enjoy the stir fry on its own or served over brown rice or whole wheat noodles.

Nutrition Information

Nutrition is per serving (without rice or noodles).

Calories	261
Protein	24 g
Total carbohydrates	19 g
Added sugars	4 g
Dietary fiber	5 g
Total fat	8 g
Saturated fat	1 g
Sodium	517 mg

More Resources

MSK Resources

Food Resources During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This handout lists resources to help with making food choices during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can find it at www.mskcc.org/pe/food_covid or ask a member of your care team for a copy.

MSK Food Pantry Program

646-888-8046

MSK's food pantry program provides non-perishable food to people in need during their cancer treatment. For more information, talk with your Clinical Dietitian Nutritionist or social worker or call the number above.

Cookbooks

Good and Cheap: Eat Well on \$4 a Day by Leanne Brown

Visit www.leannebrown.com/good-and-cheap.pdf to get a free online version of this cookbook.

Cook for Your Life: Delicious, Nourishing Recipes for Before, During, and after Cancer Treatment by Ann Ogden Gaffney

Websites and Blogs

New American Plate: Setting your Table to Prevent Cancer

www.aicr.org/cancer-prevention/healthy-eating/new-american-plate

This website has recipes and nutrition tips.

American Cancer Society (ACS) Patient Programs and Services

www.cancer.org/treatment/support-programs-and-services.html

This group has programs and services to help people find information about cancer prevention, treatment, and recovery.

Cancer Hope Network

www.cancerhopenetwork.org

This group helps connect patients and caregivers with resources, programs, and support to ease the cancer journey.

Cancercare

www.cancercare.org

This group offers free, professional support services for caregivers and loved ones. Services are available online, over the telephone, and in person. It also offers caregiving information and other resources.

Cancer Hope Network

www.cancerhopenetwork.org

Volunteers from this group offer free, confidential 1-on-1 telephone support for people with cancer and family members.

Caregiver Action Network

www.caregiveraction.org

This group supports and educates family caregivers and helps them connect with other caregivers and become their own advocates. Membership is free to caregivers.

NeedyMeds

www.needymeds.org

This group shares information about medical assistance programs available at no cost to those in need.

Social Security Extra Help Plan

www.ssa.gov/benefits/medicare/prescriptionhelp

This program helps people with limited income and resources pay Medicare prescription drug program costs, such as premiums, deductibles, and coinsurances.

Meals on Wheels

www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org

This program delivers nutritious meals to older adults.

Mom's Meals

www.momsmeals.com/our-food/nutrition/cancer-support

Mom's Meals offers menu options made to meet the nutritional needs of cancer patients.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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