



# Off Treatment

*Financial Guidance for Cancer Survivors and Their Families*



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR  
FINANCIAL EDUCATION

*Partnering for Financial Well-Being*

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*“People ask me how I feel now that I’m ‘over’ my cancer.*

*I guess they think that dealing with cancer is like having a case of the flu. They don’t realize that I’ll never look at life the same again. I’m still tired – but getting stronger. It’s easier to talk about how I feel physically than emotionally.*

*Frankly, I’m surprised by my own feelings. Of course, I’m relieved. But I’m a bit scared, too. I guess I’d gotten used to being cared for by the doctors, nurses, and social workers. Now, all that is changing, and the change is unsettling. I lived so much in the present that it’s difficult to think about the future.*

*And thinking about the future means dealing with practical matters, like finding a way out of debt. Luckily, my medical plan is a good one. However, it didn’t pay for everything, and the bills have piled up. I’ve also got decisions to make about work. Do I stay where I am now? Will my cancer history hurt my chances for promotion or a better job?*

*Still, I suppose it’s good that I have these concerns. I guess it means that I’m taking control again and starting to rebuild my life after treatment.”*



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# Embracing Survivorship

If your treatments are ending, you may feel the desire to take control of your life. You probably look at your life, your job, and your relationships differently now. You may consider making major changes.

Ending treatment is a milestone in your life. But like most milestones – even positive ones – facing a new direction can be unsettling. Also, many people who've had an experience with cancer feel a sense of vulnerability. To help cope with the change and your feelings, seriously consider talking with an oncology social worker or cancer counselor or joining a support group. The American Cancer Society can give you information about cancer survivor support groups and other sources of support. Call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

Another area you might need help in is your finances. You need to know where you stand financially. Are medical bills still coming in? How much debt has accumulated? Will you soon have a regular paycheck again to help pay expenses? How do you rebuild your accounts? These are not easy questions, and you may not want to face your finances. Frankly, few people do. Still, taking stock of your finances is an important step in taking back control of your life. This booklet was developed to help you through that process so you can make sound decisions about your financial and physical well-being.

# Returning to Work

During your treatment, you may have taken time off work, or at least reduced your work hours. Before returning to your original workload and schedule, ask yourself some questions:

- Is my job stressful?
- Does my doctor think it's all right for me to be in a stressful workplace?
- Does my job require long hours? Is this more than I can handle now?
- Do I still need close medical follow up and testing?
- Can I fit my follow-up medical visits into my work schedule?

Discuss your plans to return to work with your doctor. Also, if you are getting funds from a disability income policy, review the policy before going back to work. For health and money reasons, it often is best not to rush back to your old work schedule. Most disability policies continue where they left off if you return to work and must leave again within six months. A few companies consider any break in the disability claim to be the end of the claim. If you must leave work again, you will face a new elimination period. This can be good or bad, depending on your specific circumstances.

One option to consider is working part time. Some disability policies will allow you to return to work part time and still collect part of your benefits. Your company's benefits office or insurance company can tell you about the features of your disability plan.

If you collected Social Security disability benefits during treatment, you may want to try Social Security's Trial Work Program. This program allows you to work for nine months (not necessarily consecutive) without losing benefits. For more information on this program, call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 or visit [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

Give careful thought to going back to work. If you and your doctor both agree that it's all right to do this, then it's time to look at your work situation. What will you tell your employer? Will you have any special needs? Let's look more closely at these issues.

### ***If I go back to my job, how much should I tell my employer?***

You may be concerned about how your prognosis could affect your job. Maybe you never told your employer about your cancer diagnosis. What should you do when you go back to work?

If you have been out of work, your employer knows something is up. In many cases, the more you tell your boss, the more comfortable he or she will feel. But not all employers will react or handle your situation the same. How much you decide to say depends on what you know about your employer and how your company supports its employees.

### ***I'll still need treatments for a while. How do I protect my job?***

You may need to miss work for follow-up doctor visits. You may even need special arrangements to do your job. For these

reasons, it is a good idea to let your employer know about your health. When you talk to your boss, give as much information as possible. That way, he or she will know what to expect. Your employer likely will want your return to work to be easy and comfortable. It's good to know that once you talk with your employer, you may be protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

The ADA provides for reasonable accommodation. In other words, the employer must arrange for any reasonable special needs you have to do your job. This may mean giving you flex-time, allowing you to work from home, or getting special equipment. But the ADA protects your employer, as well. Whatever arrangements are made for you should not be too inconvenient for the employer. The ADA applies to businesses with 15 or more workers.

Call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345 for more information on ADA.

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act, employers with 50 or more workers must give up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave. The leave can be taken to care for yourself or for a family member with a serious illness. Again, to be covered by the act, you need to tell your employer (and any primary caregiver's employer) about your health needs.

Most employers will try to work with you. Still, it's a good idea to keep careful records of all talks with the employer or people in the benefits office. List the name of the person with whom you talked, what you met about, the date and place you talked, and any conclusions reached. Keep copies of your performance reviews. Legal help is available if you feel you have been treated unfairly at work. (See "General Resources" on page 16.)

# Looking for a New Job

## *I wasn't happy in my job before. I don't think I want to go back to it now.*

If you are not happy with your job, maybe it's time to look for a new one. But keep in mind that a new job should offer improvements: better pay or benefits, more challenge, less stress, or greater fulfillment.

Think about what kind of work you would like to do. You don't have to settle for less just because of your cancer diagnosis. At the same time, don't take on more than you can handle. Your health comes first, so be careful not to do too much.

What type of job would you like? Take an honest look at your skills and abilities. Apply for jobs you know would fit you well. You don't have to volunteer any information about your cancer if you aren't asked. Mention it only if it would have an effect on your doing the job. Try to set up your resume in a way that does not show time gaps in employment. For example, you could organize your resume by your skills instead of employment dates.

Employers cannot make you take a medical exam before you are offered a job. After you are offered a job, they can ask you medical questions only if they relate to doing the job. If the employer asks about your health, don't lie. Be prepared with a positive response. Have something in writing, perhaps a letter from your doctor, stating that you are able to handle the job. If you feel you have been treated unfairly in the hiring process, call the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. (See "General Resources" on page 16.)

## *How do I find out the details about benefits before I take a new job?*

Having good benefits is an important part of a sound financial plan. This is true for all workers, not just cancer survivors. So before you accept a job offer, ask to see the employer's benefits book. It's not a good idea to ask for this information during the first interview, but it is definitely all right when you are offered the job.

Maybe you are afraid that asking to review this information will send up a "red flag" to the employer. There are a few ways to avoid suspicion. For example, perhaps a financial advisor is going to look at your benefits and needs the information to review. Perhaps a friend or spouse knows a great deal about benefits and you would like that person to look over the information.

Large employers usually offer the most generous benefits. They often have a benefits package that includes health care coverage and, possibly, life and disability insurance.

## *What kind of benefits should I look for?*

**Medical plan.** It is important for everyone to have good medical coverage. If your potential new employer doesn't have a medical plan, you might want to find one who does. Few employers pay for the entire cost of a medical plan. Most only pay a part of the cost. When looking for a new job, try to find an employer with the best blend of job responsibilities and benefits. To help determine if a medical plan fits your needs, refer to the chart, "Medical Plan Features" on page 7.

Before switching jobs, find out how long it will take before you're covered under your new employer's health care plan. Some employers might make you wait 60 or 90 days before you can join the health plan. (This is another reason to review the employer's benefits book.)

It is important not to have gaps in your medical coverage, or you might face a preexisting condition exclusion period. A preexisting condition is a health problem that you had before you joined your medical plan. When this happens, your new plan will make you wait a certain length of time before it pays the costs of that medical problem. The wait can be as long as a year. As a cancer survivor, this wait could be costly. You would have to pay for any tests or treatments that occurred during the exclusion period.

There are rules about exclusion periods that help the individual. If you have met the following, then an exclusion period *doesn't* apply to you:

- You have had medical coverage for 18 months.
- You have already met a preexisting condition exclusion period.
- You have not been without health coverage for more than 62 days.

One way to switch jobs but continue your health coverage is to use COBRA. The initials stand for the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985. The act lets you continue under your old employer's medical plan for up to 18, 29, or 36 months (depending on the circumstances). COBRA can be very helpful if you switch jobs but the new employer's plan won't start for several months.

COBRA applies as long as the employer has 20 or more employees and remains in business. Your employer must inform you, in writing, about the COBRA option. To take advantage of COBRA, you must activate its coverage within 60 days of leaving your job.

There is a catch – and it's a big one. You must pay for the full cost of coverage, plus up to two percent to cover administrative costs. But the cost of coverage is at the employer's group rate.

**Long-term disability insurance.**

Another good benefit to look for is long-term disability insurance. This type of insurance typically gives you 60 to 70 percent of your monthly income if you are unable to work. Most of these policies will have a preexisting condition exclusion period. If you pay part of the cost of this insurance, a proportionate part of the benefits will be income tax free. To the extent your employer pays the cost, those benefits will be subject to income tax.

**Life insurance.** Some amount of life insurance has a place in most people's lives. For example, you may be helping to support a family. Life insurance would help replace your lost income if you die. The amount of life insurance you need depends on your unique situation. Also, if you ever do have a cancer recurrence, life insurance could be a source of cash. A financial advisor can help you decide how much life insurance is enough.

Some employers offer life insurance as a benefit. For example, you may be offered life insurance equal to one or two times your yearly income. With this type of group plan, you probably would not be asked for proof of insurability. The employer may even pay the entire cost of this insurance. If the employer pays for more than \$50,000 of group life insurance, you will have to pay taxes on the value of the excess insurance.

You may be able to buy more life insurance and pay for it yourself. But any additional coverage you buy may require proof of insurability.

**Retirement plan.** While you were in treatment, you may have seen your savings shrink. Putting money into a retirement plan can help rebuild your savings. In most cases, the money you put into a retirement plan reduces your taxable income. You don't pay taxes on the money the account earns until you take it out – ideally, after you retire. So it's a good idea to put as much money as you can afford into a retirement plan.

If you're looking for a new job, be sure to review the employer's retirement plan. Some employers may match the amount you put into the plan. For example, the employer may put in 25 cents, 50 cents, or even a dollar for each dollar you put in. So, the money they put toward your retirement is like a bonus to you.

### *I want to become self-employed. What should I do about benefits?*

By far, the most important benefit to have is a good medical plan. Many insurance companies and health maintenance organizations do offer plans to individuals.

These plans could be expensive, but medical coverage is simply too important to go without. Also, as a self-employed person, you will likely be able to take a deduction from your income for the entire premium paid for your health care plan. (The IRS has publications about this subject, or check with your tax advisor.)

As explained on the previous page, it's important not to have any gaps in your medical coverage, or you may face a preexisting condition exclusion period. If you are leaving an employer to work for yourself, find out if COBRA is an option. COBRA will give you time to find a medical plan that suits your needs.

Obtaining other benefits, such as long-term disability insurance and life insurance, is discussed in the "Living Without Benefits" section on page 8.

## The Need to Stay Away from Work

### *Since I can't return to work yet, what do I do?*

Perhaps you and your doctor agree that you are not ready to return to work. If you are getting funds from a disability plan, read the plan carefully. Find out how long the benefits will last. Also find out if the plan's benefits change over time. For example, some plans provide benefits for

two years if you can't work in your own occupation. Then, after two years, they provide benefits only if you can't work in *any* occupation.

If Medicare or Medicaid is covering your health care, it's likely that you will continue to be covered by the same program. Remember, these benefits continue only as long as you are unable to work.

## Medical Plan Features

Feature	Average to Good Plans
<b>Yearly deductible.</b> How much of your own money must you spend on doctor bills before the health care plan begins to pay?	\$100 to \$300 per person; 3 x individual deductible for family
<b>Annual coinsurance limit.</b> (This has many names. Ask questions so that you understand how it works for your plan.) The coinsurance limit is the cumulative amount of your 20 or 30 percent payment for covered expenses beyond the deductible. How much in total must you chip in before the policy pays all covered charges?	\$2,000
<b>Copayment.</b> How much would you pay each time you visit an HMO, PPO, or POS plan's health care provider? Copayment often is called "copay."	\$10 to \$25 per visit
<b>Choice of medical service provider.</b> Can you pick your own doctor from anyone in town, or must you use someone who belongs to the plan group?	Any provider or a wide choice within a network
<b>Preexisting condition exclusion period.</b> Sometimes people have an illness, such as high blood pressure or diabetes, when they sign up for health insurance. Will you have to wait before the health plan would pay for treatment of that illness?	None or only a short time period (May depend on whether you had a health plan before this one. See page 5.)
<b>Specific illness excluded.</b> Are there any illnesses (such as cancer) that the policy will not cover?	None
<b>Specific treatments excluded or limited.</b> Are there any treatments, such as organ transplants, treatment for infertility, chiropractic care, or physical therapy, that the policy limits or will not cover?	No more than reasonable
<b>Hospital costs covered.</b> What share of hospital costs will the policy cover?	All (After deductible and/or copayment)
<b>Days of hospital coverage in a year.</b> If you need to be hospitalized, how many days will the insurance pay for each year?	365
<b>Prescription drugs.</b> How much do you have to pay for prescription drugs?	Usually \$10 to \$50 (a copayment) or 80 percent of cost (after deductible)
<b>Lifetime maximum payment.</b> If you are sick or injured several times during your life, what is the cap on total payments the policy will make?	Unlimited or \$1 million
<b>Home care visits.</b> If a nurse needs to see you at your home, how many visits will the policy pay for?	52 per year
<b>Mental health therapy.</b> How many outpatient mental health visits will the policy cover in a year?	Varies widely by state
<b>Drug/alcohol treatment.</b> What kind of drug and alcohol treatment will the policy pay for?	Varies widely by state

# Living Without Benefits

## *Currently, I don't have benefits. What can I do?*

Find out if you qualify for COBRA from your employer. COBRA serves two purposes. As discussed earlier, it can extend your health care coverage. It can also help you qualify for a private health care policy. For example, if you stay on COBRA until it runs out, you cannot be turned down to buy a private health care policy. The insurance company cannot make you prove insurability or make you face a preexisting condition exclusion period. Make sure you buy the private policy within 62 days from the date that COBRA runs out.

If you have been without a health care plan for more than 62 days, your cancer experience will make it difficult for you to buy health insurance. If you do get turned down for a private policy, you may be able to get a state-sponsored plan. These plans were designed to provide health care coverage for hard-to-insure people. The cost of a state plan may be 20 percent higher, but you will at least have health coverage. To learn more about these plans, call your state's insurance commission.

**Long-term disability insurance.** As a cancer survivor, group coverage may be your only option. You may be able to get insurance through a professional, trade, or alumni organization. Most of these require proof of insurability. These groups often are also sources for other benefits such as medical insurance and life insurance. Check to make sure that the group's plan is allowed in your state.

**Life insurance.** For someone who has recently gone through cancer treatment, the only type of life insurance available may be guaranteed or simplified issue. With this kind of insurance, very few questions are asked about your health. However, the cost of the policy will be high. These policies also may set limits before they would pay a death benefit. For example, some policies say that, if you die within two years of buying the policy, your heirs would not receive the death benefit. The only money they would get is the amount you paid into premiums, plus interest. If you die after the two-year period, the full or a graded death benefit would be paid.

Once you have been a long-term cancer survivor, you may be able to get a more typical form of life insurance. Not all companies will insure someone with a cancer history. You may have to look at several companies before you find one that will meet your needs. A good insurance agent can help you find a company that specializes in hard-to-insure individuals.

# Facing Lifetime Maximums

## *I'm reaching the lifetime maximum on my medical coverage. What can I do?*

If you are reaching the lifetime maximum on your medical plan, you may be able to buy new insurance. You can avoid having to wait through another preexisting condition exclusion period if the following apply:

- You have had medical coverage for 18 months.
- You have already met a preexisting condition exclusion period.
- You have not been without health coverage for more than 62 days.

If you change jobs and your new employer has health coverage, your coverage starts over. If you meet the criteria above, you won't be subject to another waiting period. If you don't, you'll likely have to wait a certain length of time before the new plan would pay for your preexisting condition. This wait often is no more than a year.

Another option is that if your employer offers more than one health care plan, you may be able to change from one to another during an open enrollment period.

# Rebuilding Your Finances

Now that you're rebuilding your health, you may also need to rebuild your financial well-being. This is a good time to take some financial steps you might not have taken earlier.

## *I have high credit card balances. How do I pay them off?*

If you have had to use your credit cards to pay for things during your cancer treatment, you are not alone. There were probably many out-of-pocket expenses that weren't covered by insurance. Try not to feel overwhelmed by the debt.

Remember, you worked your way through a diagnosis of cancer and cancer treatments, and you can work your way through your finances.

First, compare all your credit card bills. See which credit cards have the lowest interest rates and try to move all your balances onto those cards. You also can call the credit card companies and negotiate for lower rates. Use credit cards that have credit disability and credit life insurance. They make minimum payments during periods of disability or pay off your balances at death.

If you cannot meet the minimum payments, you should call the credit card companies. Once they understand your situation, they usually will try to work with you. Keep in mind that credit card companies prefer that you make some attempt to pay, rather than not pay at all. If you make small but consistent payments, you often can avoid phone calls demanding payment.

Other options include a debt consolidation or home equity loan. Often, these have lower interest rates than credit cards and can be paid over many years. The interest paid on a home equity loan may be tax deductible. Another possible option is to ask a relative for a loan. For more about this topic, refer to the sidebar, “Family Loans Without a Family Feud” on page 11.

You may be struggling with your other bills, such as utilities, mortgage or rent, doctors, and medical providers. Try to make payment plans with them.

It may be hard to make these phone calls. People often are embarrassed to ask for financial help or understanding. But remember, you probably have paid bills on time all of your life. It’s likely that most businesses and other creditors think well of you. Think of this as equity, based on the reputation you have built up over the years. Now you need to use a little of that equity. Most of these businesses will be willing to work out a plan that fits your needs as well as theirs.

If you can’t reach an agreement with your creditors, you can get credit counseling. Look in the business section of the telephone book for the phone number of Consumer Credit Counseling Service. They will help you set up a budget. They may be able to work with your creditors to arrange a payment plan.

### *What if I still can’t meet my monthly payments?*

If you cannot make the monthly payments on your bills, you may have to resort to bankruptcy. But this should be a last resort. If bankruptcy is your only choice, it’s a good idea to get advice from a bankruptcy lawyer. This area of the law can be very complex. Bankruptcy can affect you long after you file. A lawyer who specializes in this type of law can help you understand all the issues involved. Legal aid clinics or similar nonprofit organizations may give advice on bankruptcy.

### *How do I start making sense of my money?*

**Set up a spending plan.** Now that you have finished treatment, a budget can help you get back on track. The monthly payments you make to reduce debts should be part of that budget. In addition, figure in the amount that will be set aside for emergencies.

Be careful not to set your sights too high. The amounts of money that go into your emergency fund and toward paying your bills should not put too much stress on you. By having realistic goals, you will have an easier time sticking with your budget.

If you can, have the money taken directly out of your checking account or paycheck regularly. You can always increase the amount if you find you can handle more.

**Rebuild your cash reserve.** Your cash reserve is an emergency fund. To set up an emergency fund, set aside enough money to cover three to six months of expenses. The funds always should be kept stable and safe. Savings accounts or money market accounts at a bank or a money market mutual fund work well. Generally, these funds will grow slowly, but have little risk of loss. Therefore, the money should be there when you need it.

## *Should I invest my money aggressively so I can build my savings quickly?*

**Invest cautiously!** Until your emergency fund is adequate and your insurance needs are taken care of, you are best advised to maintain a conservative approach to investing. It may be a good

idea to remain conservative until you have been free of cancer for a few years. This reduces your susceptibility to fluctuating values on your investments when you need the money for additional treatment. Work with a financial advisor to find the investments that are right for you.

### *Family Loans Without a Family Feud*

If you need to turn to a family member for a loan to pay some of your cancer-related expenses or bills, here are a few tips to avoid family conflict:

**1. Be realistic about repayment.** Asking for a loan implies that you intend to pay the money back. Don't ask for a loan if you doubt you could ever repay the money. Many family loans are never repaid, which often leads to feelings of bitterness and betrayal. If you don't think you could repay a loan, it would be better to ask for a gift instead. Anyone, including a relative, can give a gift of up to \$11,000 (for 2004) tax free each year. Married couples can make a joint gift of up to \$22,000 (for 2004) tax free per year. Anyone can pay the medical bills of someone else without being subject to the gift limit if the payment is made directly to the medical facility or health care provider.

**2. Choose the right relative to loan you the money.** When some people loan money, they feel they have the right to influence the borrower's personal decisions. This influence, no matter how well-intended, can create personal stress and family conflict.

**3. Ask only those relatives who can afford a loan.** Don't expect relatives to get cash advances from credit cards or other sources to loan you money.

**4. Expect to pay some amount of interest.** The relative loaning you money is, to some degree, making a financial sacrifice. For example, the money going to you may have been intended to pay for a college education. The relative should receive some compensation. There are federal tax implications if the person making the loan charges an interest rate below the minimum federal rate. The tax laws in this area are complicated, and there are exceptions. Still, it's a good idea to pay at least the minimum federal interest rate on a family loan. To find out the federal rate, consult a tax advisor.

**5. Put it in writing.** State the amount of the loan, interest rate, and repayment schedule. Even if the relative loaning you the money doesn't think putting the agreement in writing is necessary, do it anyway. It will show your intent to treat your relative fairly. It will also provide proof to the relative that a loan occurred. Then, if you're unable to repay the loan in full, the relative can take the loss off his or her taxes.

# Basic Estate Planning

Estate planning isn't just for people building a villa in the country. Everything you own is your estate. This includes your house, car, and possessions. An estate usually includes your insurance policies, retirement funds, and savings. It's a wise choice to have a plan for these assets. Estate planning isn't just for cancer survivors; it's for everyone. It allows you to be in control of your money at all stages of your life as well as at the end of your life. It is also the step that allows you to maintain control over your health care.

When you were in treatment, perhaps you couldn't face the idea of planning your estate. Now that you're off treatment, it's time to deal with this topic.

## *What estate planning documents will I need?*

At a minimum, everyone needs a will, a durable power of attorney, a health care proxy, and possibly a living will.

**Will.** How your will is written depends on your wishes and the size of your estate. A will also is where you name a guardian for any minor children and assets that would become theirs. Everyone should draft a will, but it is even more important if you have children. Remember that if you die without a will, the state will step in and distribute your estate and determine who will raise your children.

**Durable power of attorney.** This allows you to name a person who will handle your finances for you if you cannot handle them yourself.

**Health care proxy.** A health care proxy allows you to name a person who will make decisions about your health care if you cannot make them. This document may be called a medical power of attorney in some states.

**Living will.** The living will allows you to decide ahead of time what types of medical treatment you want if you are unable to communicate those choices.

If your finances are simple, it may be enough to have these estate planning documents drafted at a legal clinic or a similar nonprofit organization.

If possible, discuss your estate planning needs with an estate attorney. He or she can draw up the documents. Depending on your finances, you may need to set up a trust to help protect your assets from taxes and/or probate costs. To see if a trust is right for you, talk with a financial advisor or qualified lawyer.

# Where to Go for Help

## *Where can I get professional advice about my financial situation after cancer treatment?*

If your financial situation is complex, you may want to seek the help of a professional financial advisor. But make sure he or she has experience handling the financial aspects of a serious illness. To help you get started, refer to the brochure, *How to Find a Financial Professional Sensitive to Cancer Issues*, available through the American Cancer Society. Call 1-800-ACS-2345.

If you have legal questions, find a lawyer who specializes in your area of concern, such as insurance law, estate planning, or employment discrimination. This advice may be available free of charge at a legal aid clinic in your area.

## *I didn't plan financially the way I should have. Is it too late?*

No, it's not too late. You have completed your cancer treatment. This is a great time to take exciting steps to be in control of your life. Your finances are an important part of that progress. Financial planning is good for everyone – not just cancer survivors. It gives you peace of mind and a sense of empowerment to know that you are on your way to financial well-being.

# Financial Resources

The manner in which each of the following sources of financial support affect other potential benefits is dependent on many factors. It is recommended that you seek the advice of a competent advisor to ensure that you know the ramifications of the various options.

Sources of Health Care	Issues
Medical Insurance	Must continue paying premiums
COBRA	18 to 36 month extension of group health benefits Must pay premium
Hill-Burton Program (low- or no-cost health care) 1-800-638-0742 In MD: 1-800-492-0359	Must use Hill-Burton facilities Not all services are available Eligibility based on family size and income (income below current poverty guidelines)
Medicare 1-800-MEDICARE	Eligibility based on eligibility for Social Security benefits or Railroad retirement benefits and certain other health problems Must pay for part B of program
Medicaid (contact state office)	Eligibility based on family size, assets, and income
Veteran's Benefits (contact local office)	Service-connected problems generally are covered May require low income for certain benefits May require some deductibles
Long-Term Care Benefits	Issues
Long-Term Care Insurance	Must pay premiums (usually waived when receiving benefits) May create income tax obligation May be all or partially tax deductible May affect qualifying for government benefits Must meet definition required for benefits (usually federal definition for chronically ill)
Hill-Burton Program	See Sources of Health Care above
Veteran's Benefits	See Sources of Health Care above
Medicaid (state program)	Eligibility based on family size, assets, and income
Accelerated Death Benefits (some life insurance policies)	Must be terminally or chronically ill (contact insurance company) May create income tax obligation May affect qualifying for government benefits Must meet definition required for benefits (usually federal definition for chronically or terminally ill)

<b>Sources of Income</b>	<b>Issues</b>
Disability Income Insurance	Must pay premiums until waived by insurance company May affect qualifying for government benefits Must meet definition of disability under policy
Reverse Mortgage	Creates income tax obligation May affect qualifying for some government benefits May ultimately require payments Must pass credit check Some age restrictions Should be reviewed by competent advisor
Social Security 1-800-772-1213	Must be disabled or retired May create income tax obligation May affect qualifying for other government benefits
SSI (Supplemental Security Income)	Must be disabled, over age 65, and/or blind Must meet income restrictions May affect qualifying for other government benefits
Temporary Aid to Needy Families	Must meet low-income guidelines May require disability May require employment history
<b>Sources of Lump-Sum Cash</b>	<b>Issues</b>
Assets (sale of stock, real estate, etc.)	May create income tax obligation May affect qualifying for government benefits
Home Equity Loan (may be lump sum or line of credit)	Home put at risk Must have equity in home Must make regular payments Must pass credit check
Family/Personal Loan	Requires repayment May strain family relationships May require collateral
Policy Loan (from life insurance company)	Death benefit is reduced by the amount of the loan and accrued interest Policy must have cash value Must generally continue premium payments
Block Grants (provides services)	Must meet family income limits May affect qualifying for government benefits
Accelerated Death Benefits (life insurance)	Must keep policy in force Must be terminally ill (contact insurance company) May create income tax obligation May affect qualifying for government benefits
Viatical Loan (borrow from investor using life insurance as collateral) or Viatical Settlement (sell life insurance policy to investor)	May create income tax obligation Must own policy Must meet definition of terminally or chronically ill May affect qualifying for government benefits

# General Resources

## Assistance Organizations

The American Cancer Society can provide current information, publications, and guidance about cancer issues. They also can provide information about other cancer organizations. Call 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

## Books

*A Cancer Survivor's Almanac: Charting Your Journey*, 1996. Edited by Barbara Hoffman, JD, with an introduction by Fitzhugh Mullan, MD, by the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship. Published by Chronimed Publishing. The almanac shares information, strategies, and support for living with and beyond cancer. It details such issues as managing health and life insurance needs, preventing job discrimination, and controlling pain.

## Credit Reports

It's always a good idea to check your credit report occasionally. Call the three major credit reporting agencies to find out how to get a copy of your report from each.

Equifax  
PO Box 105873  
Atlanta, GA 30348  
1-800-685-1111  
[www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)

Experian  
PO Box 8030  
Layton, UT 84041-8030  
1-866-200-6020  
[www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)

TransUnion LLC  
Consumer Disclosure Center  
PO Box 390  
Springfield, PA 19064-0390  
1-800-916-8800  
1-800-888-4213 (automated request line)  
[www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)

## Find a Financial Planner

Refer to the booklet, *How to Find a Financial Professional Sensitive to Cancer Issues*, which is available through the American Cancer Society. Call 1-800-ACS-2345.

## Job Discrimination Protection

For information about protection against job discrimination, call the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Find the office nearest you by calling 1-800-669-4000 or go to [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov).

## Medical Plan Questions

Do you have questions about your medical insurance? The Insurance Information Institute has a toll-free help line and offers some free publications. Call the National Insurance Consumer Helpline at 1-800-942-4242.

## Medicare Information

If you have questions about Medicare, call the hotline at 1-800-MEDICARE.

## Social Security Information

The Social Security Administration has many useful publications available, such as *Working While Disabled: How We Can Help*. This publication can be ordered by calling the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213. They also have a comprehensive Web site featuring detailed information about Social Security programs. The Web site address is [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov).

# Spending Plan

We recommend that you seek advice as to how any specific choice will affect you, based on your individual circumstances.

For the month of \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Income sources</b>	Wages (after taxes, deductions) . . . . .	\$ _____
	Social Security/Supplemental Security Income	\$ _____
	Short- or long-term disability benefits . . . . .	\$ _____
	Investments . . . . .	\$ _____
	Other . . . . .	\$ _____
<b>Total income</b>		\$ _____

<b>General expenses</b>	Regular monthly expenses (include household expenses, insurance premiums, etc.) . . . . .	\$ _____
	<b>Total 1</b>	\$ _____

<b>Out-of-pocket medical expenses (average monthly)</b>	Deductibles . . . . .	\$ _____
	Coinsurance . . . . .	\$ _____
	Copayments . . . . .	\$ _____
	Medical travel . . . . .	\$ _____
	Prescription drugs . . . . .	\$ _____
	Medical insurance premiums . . . . .	\$ _____
<b>Total 2</b>		\$ _____

<b>Payments on one-time expenses or periodic services</b>	Necessary changes to home (contractor, etc.)	\$ _____
	Professional fees (lawyer, financial planner)	\$ _____
	<b>Total 3</b>	\$ _____

<b>Special expenses</b>	Special diets . . . . .	\$ _____
	Travel . . . . .	\$ _____
	Education . . . . .	\$ _____
	Other . . . . .	\$ _____
	<b>Total 4</b>	\$ _____

<b>Total expenses (Sum of Totals 1, 2, 3, 4)</b>	\$ _____
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Make several copies of this spending plan and use one for each month. Try to plan at least a few months in advance. Your cancer experience may result in spending plans that vary widely from one month to the next. However, the more months you use spending plans, the more accurate your financial forecast will become.

# Glossary

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** This federal civil rights law protects the rights of people with disabilities. The act says that the employer must make “reasonable accommodation” to allow a disabled person to do his or her job. The ADA applies to businesses with 15 or more workers.

**COBRA:** COBRA is a law that lets you keep your health plan after you leave a job. COBRA applies only if you had a health plan at the old job. You can keep your old health plan for 18, 29, or 36 months (depending on the circumstances). You must pay the full cost of the coverage. (“COBRA” stands for Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act.) COBRA applies to employers that have 20 or more employees and that remain in business.

**Disability insurance:** A type of insurance that pays money to people who are injured or sick and cannot work. Payments are made each month. Disability plans can be either short term or long term.

**Family and Medical Leave Act:** This law says that employers with 50 or more workers must give up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave. The leave can be taken to care for yourself or a family member with a serious illness.

**Lifetime maximum:** This is the maximum amount, or limit, that a medical insurance plan will pay in benefits to one person.

**Medicaid:** This government program pays the cost of medical care for low-income people. To qualify, your income and assets must be below a certain level. That level is set by the state in which you live. Not all doctors and hospitals accept Medicaid.

**Medicare:** This government program pays for medical care. After 29 months of being disabled and receiving Social Security Disability Income, you qualify for Medicare. You may also qualify for Medicare if you are age 65 or older and retired. Many doctors and hospitals accept Medicare. Check with any health care providers you intend to use to ensure they accept Medicare assignment.

**Social Security Disability Income:** This federal government program pays monthly income benefits if you are disabled. You must meet specific qualifications and strict disability guidelines to be eligible for benefits.

**Supplemental Security Income:** This government program pays benefits to low-income people who are eligible for Social Security Disability Income benefits. Many states supplement the federal SSI payment. Income rules that affect the supplementary payment are likely to vary among states.







## Other Publications in This Series

### ***In Treatment***

*Financial Guidance for Cancer Survivors and Their Families*

### ***Advanced Illness***

*Financial Guidance for Cancer Survivors and Their Families*

### ***How to Find a Financial Professional Sensitive to Cancer Issues***

*Financial Guidance for Cancer Survivors and Their Families*

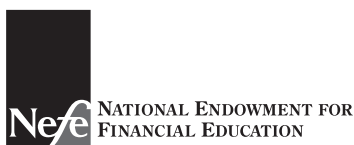
### ***Can I Be Prepared If Cancer Occurs?***

*Financial Guidance for Those with Concerns About Cancer*

### ***Coping Financially with the Loss of a Loved One***

*Financial Guidance for Families*

These titles are available through the American Cancer Society by calling 1-800-ACS-2345.



*Partnering for Financial Well-Being*

***Off Treatment:*** *Financial Guidance for Cancer Survivors and Their Families* was written and prepared as a public service by the Denver-based National Endowment for Financial Education®, or NEFE®; William L. Anthes, PhD, *President*; Brent A. Neiser, CFP, *Director of Collaborative Programs*; and Mary J. Schultz, *Project Manager*.

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Note: Certain content areas in this material are current as of the printing, but, over time, legislative and regulatory changes, as well as new developments, may date this material. This booklet is meant to provide general financial information; it is not meant to be a substitute for or to supersede professional or legal advice.



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1.800.ACS.2345  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

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