



**swiss cancer league**

# How to balance Work and Care

**A guide of the cancer league for  
caregiving relatives in the work process**



# How caregiving relatives can cope well with their day-to-day work

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## **Each Type of Cancer is Unique**

There is not just *one type* of cancer. Each person reacts individually to the disease and deals with the situation in a very personal way.

## **What you should know as a caregiving relative and what your professional environment may not know**

Cancer leaves its mark - among those affected and in their environment. Caregiving relatives in particular can suffer from similar or even the same symptoms as those suffering from cancer themselves: for example under fatigue (chronic fatigue syndrome), mood swings, difficulty concentrating, burden and stress due to numerous appointments, reorganization of family tasks or reduced resilience to increasing demands.

It is possible that not everyone in your professional environment is aware of this. Or that your work colleagues and your superiors do not even know how much the new situation is demanding and stressful for you - personally and professionally.

## **It's about you**

Proactive and honest communication with superiors and colleagues about your situation and your needs helps them to understand your situation at all or better. It also makes it easier for them to help with any adjustments at the workplace.

Your superiors, the team and the human resources department can provide support during this demanding time.

# Inform the professional environment

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« When my seriously ill mother was also diagnosed with breast cancer, I was in shock. For the first few days, I went to work like a robot, didn't say anything to anyone and tried to persevere somehow. Then I took heart and spoke to my boss. Her understanding and empathy provided solid ground for me again. We were then able to talk about very practical things and she even helped me inform the team »\*

\*Name of the editor known

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## Checklist for Caregiving Relatives in the work process

- I allow my reactions and uncertainties sufficient time. I am aware that the demanding situation also has a major impact on my everyday life - personally and professionally. If necessary, I will consult with my team leader or with the human resources department and/or with my Cantonal or Regional Cancer League.
- Who do I want to inform and what should I communicate when and how at my workplace? What do I wish to share about my situation? I will write down some notes beforehand.
- I think about what I do *not* want to share with my colleagues and superiors.
- I clarify and inform at my workplace whether and how I would like to be asked about my situation.
- If I have concerns that I may not be able to continue working as usual due to my caregiving responsibilities (for a while), then I speak openly with my superior and the human resources department about my needs and any work performance limitations.

# Clarify legal questions and appropriate measures

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« My wife has incurable cancer and will not live long. Now I have to take care of her and our children and all of the other organizational tasks. I can still reduce compensate with overtime and take some vacation. But, as a team leader I have a certain amount of responsibility at work and have to make sure that my work somehow gets done. What happens when I have used up all of my work leave? And when and how can I have a break and relax? »\*

\*Name of the editor known

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## Checklist for Caregiving Relatives in the work process

- I inform myself on legislative issues my country provides for this situation and which regulations apply to caregiving relatives in my company.
- I analyze my own situation as closely as possible, especially the personal, familial, financial and professional aspects. I am considering what effects of the illness of my relative could have on my own professional activity.
- I formulate my own suggestions on how the current professional framework could be adjusted in order to reconcile personal and professional requirements as well as possible (for example temporary reduction of working hours, home office and other).
- I make an appointment with my supervisor and/or with the human resources department to explain my situation with my needs and suggestions and to discuss relief / adjustment options.
- Together we clarify and decide how my further assignment in the workplace can / should be designed - and record this in writing.
- In regular discussions, I reflect on the current situation together with my supervisor and/or with the human resources department. We adapt the agreed measures according to the often rapidly changing needs and record this in writing.

# What else is important

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« For a long time, I had great doubts about telling my colleagues that my little daughter had cancer and that I was therefore not always on the ball. At home, I have to do more now and therefore have to take more time off at work. I therefore will have a talk with the head of HR. I still don't know how to manage it all. »\*

\*Name of the editor known

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## Checklist for Caregiving Relatives in the work process

- I try to understand the reactions in the professional environment because my work colleagues and superiors can also be unsettled in this situation. It may be that they do not know how to react or that they cannot really understand my situation.
- I take care of my health and myself.
- I speak openly about my experiences and share my concerns - with family, friends, in support groups, with specialists, and/or others.
- I treat myself regularly time to recover and refuel and ask for assistance if needed.
- I contact my Cantonal or Regional Cancer League for advice (for example regarding insurance, legal issues, finance, social benefits, additional benefits, assistance contributions, and related issues).



# swiss cancer league

We are here to help:

**Your Cantonal or Regional Cancer League**

[www.krebsliga.ch/region](http://www.krebsliga.ch/region)

**Free Cancer Hotline**

Mon-Fri, 9-19h

0800 11 88 11

**Phone Coaching for Employers**

Free Hotline: Mon-Fri, 9-16h

0800 114 118

[cancerandwork@swisscancer.ch](mailto:cancerandwork@swisscancer.ch)

[www.krebsliga.ch/krebsundarbeit](http://www.krebsliga.ch/krebsundarbeit)

Presented by your Cancer League