

# Accepting and Managing Offers of Help

**We can benefit from accepting offers of help at times of stress, however managing and coordinating help can be overwhelming and a stress in itself!**

**Here are 10 ideas that others have found helpful that you may wish to consider:**

- 1. Say “yes” to all offers of support** – and yes, it will feel very awkward. It is very hard receiving support but people often feel privileged to be able to help. Saying “yes” to a number of offers means that the load can be shared. If you don’t need the help at the moment, thank the person and let them know that you are not sure what you may need down the track, so let them know that you may call on the offer at a later point. Cancer treatment can be a long haul and delegating and sharing tasks will reduce the impact on just one or two people. If someone offers help, you could respond: *“Thank you that’s really kind, I’ll let you know what may be helpful when I’ve talked with my family”, “I’m not sure what we will be needing but will add your name to our list of contacts”, or “I think we’re OK at the moment but please keep offering”*. If you say “no” at the beginning of treatment or enough times people may stop offering - with time, you and the people close to you may start to feel exhausted but everyone may have stopped offering as they think everything is under control!
- 2. Generate a list of tasks to delegate**, so that when people offer, you can allocate a task, for example, a regular lift for a child to a sporting activity, a frozen meal, or mowing the lawn. Try to arrange tasks so that they require minimal ongoing organisation or management: for example, meals can be dropped in a cool box at the back door between 4 and 6pm and clean containers can be returned in a box next to this, the lawn can be mowed at any time, or a basket of ironing left in a carport. Let people know not to ring the doorbell (a note on the door can serve as a reminder) if you don’t want to be disturbed (you may not have the energy for a conversation). If you have a rest period - let others know.
- 3. Change your answer phone machine and mobile messages to indicate that while you appreciate the call, you’re not able to return all calls at present.** For example: *“You have reached ....whoever.... If you are calling with well wishes or offers of support, we really appreciate your call but are unable to return calls at present. We look forward to being in touch when life settles down”, or “we will let you know of any updates by email”*.
- 4. Setting up group emails, texts or using social media sites** such as a Facebook “group” to provide information and updates saves time and effort when you may not feel like being social or tell the same information again and again. You may wish to write these before you go into hospital for a procedure or prior to important results. It is helpful to be clear that you may be



unable to receive visitors/take calls etc, but welcome cards or text messages, and assure people that you will let them know how they can help when needed.

5. Designate **one person as a 'contact person'** who will take calls and manage updates.
6. Consider **professional help with services**, even if just for a few months. It may be costly but it can allow you and your close ones to invest your energy where it's most needed (not wiping out the fridge or loading dishwasher!). Consider adjusting standards and rules for a while, for example, children may love a few weeks of school canteen lunches and friends won't judge you if your house isn't spotless.
7. **Shop online for basic household groceries.** It can be yet another job you don't need to worry about. Foods like milk and pet food can be heavy to carry, and some services have a policy of bringing groceries to the kitchen bench. Setting up this service can be a good task to do while awaiting treatment. Try local services or major supermarkets.
8. Churches, community groups and government agencies may have **volunteers** or programs to help with meals and gardening; you can try contacting your local church, community centre, hospital social worker, or GP, or look in your local newspaper to find out what is available.
9. **Online free community based calendars** can make it easier to manage offers to help, for example [www.lotsahelpinghands.com](http://www.lotsahelpinghands.com) Once you log onto the site you can set up a calendar specifying your particular needs on each day. It allows you to enter the details and your requirements, for example, a lift to and from an activity, or meals with certain dietary requirements. It can be helpful to specify favourite meals so that you don't get spaghetti bolognese and casseroles every day! It can also be helpful to ask for prepared sandwiches, fruit or snacks for the fridge and freezer. People can be directed to the calendar so they can choose what help they would like to provide. Many website can send an automatically generated reminders. When you're setting up the calendar encourage people to organise another helper if their plans change so you don't have to deal with changes. Seek permission to share the contact details of other helpers to assist this. Try [www.google.com/calendar](http://www.google.com/calendar).
10. **Your visitor policy!** If you're going into hospital, be clear about whether you want visitors and for how long. Visitors can be exhausting. If you say pop in for 5 minutes, people will stay for half an hour, if you say half an hour it will be all morning! Taking a sign and adhesive for your door or above your bed, and let nursing staff know your "visitor policy" by writing it down. You may want to use it when home too!

