

PETERBOROUGH
Ontario Health Team

Finding Your Way

Tips and tools to help you
navigate healthcare in
Peterborough and surrounding area



CREATED BY THE
**Patient, Family, and Caregiver
Advisory Committee**

Welcome

Navigating the healthcare system can be difficult for both patients and caregivers. Keeping track of appointments, tests, procedures, referrals and follow-ups, often involving a variety of people, organizations, and locations, can be daunting.

This guide aims to give you practical tools and advice when you need some support navigating the healthcare system.

Disclaimer:

**This document is not to be used as, or in place of, medical advice.
Always consult with your team of healthcare providers.**

Land Acknowledgment

Peterborough Ontario Health Team (OHT) acknowledges that the land on which we gather is the traditional and treaty territory of the Mississauga Anishnaabe.

We make this acknowledgment to honour our relationship with the William's Treaty First Nations of Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha and Scugog Island who continue, in their ancestor's footsteps, to be stewards of this land and the surrounding waters. Our community has much to learn from the First People. May we honour their teachings for the benefit of generations to come.

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Who we are

Peterborough Ontario Health Team (OHT) is made up of local organizations, healthcare professionals and community members who are coming together to collaborate and work together on improving healthcare to those locally.

We share the common goal to break down barriers to provide better care for the people of Peterborough City, Peterborough County, Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations.

Learn more!

For more information, please visit www.peterboroughoht.ca

Would you like to use your voice?

Join us!

Visit www.peterboroughoht.ca and click on ***get involved*** at the bottom of the homepage.

Accessibility

In Ontario, there is an Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, also known as AODA. It aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. It applies to any organization in the province that has one or more employees. If you need help to meet your physical or mental disability needs, be sure to ask for it.

Ontario Human Rights Code

In Ontario, the Human Rights Code states that every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, mental status, family status, or disability

If you need help to meet your physical or mental disability needs, be sure to ask for it.



Being an advocate

You have the right to know and the right to ask questions when it comes to your health. Your voice is important! Speaking up will make sure that your voice is part of the care that your healthcare team provides for you and your family.

An advocate can also be known as a champion, supporter, promoter, protector, or spokesperson.

- You can be your own advocate
- You may ask someone to advocate for you
- You could advocate for someone else (with their consent)

If you are advocating on behalf of another person you need consent or documentation from that person. It is best to speak with each organization/agency to find out the best way to inform them of your role as an advocate.

When you act as an advocate for yourself or for others it:

- Improves your and your care team's understanding of your goals and wishes.
- Creates a better experience for the whole team, which is you, your family/caregivers, and your healthcare providers.
- Increases your knowledge and preparedness for any meeting with your healthcare team.

Not sure how to be an advocate?

Here are some steps to help:

- Be proactive.
- Bring forward any questions and/or concerns that you may have. There is no such thing as “too many questions”.
- Be prepared for complex conversations. Take notes and seek clarity if the information is not clear to you.
- Ask if there is information available on the subject you are dealing with. Is there an organization specializing in this subject? Is there a brochure? A book? A website?
- Seek clarification in plain language if you don't understand any of the terms being used.
- Follow up if you do not hear back in a reasonable amount of time.

Point of entry

Navigating the healthcare system: local and provincial resources to get you started.

The following is a list of local and provincial resources to help guide you.

211 Ontario

211 is a helpline that easily connects people to the social services, programs and community supports they need. Dial 2-1-1 to call the helpline to speak with a Community Navigator 24/7 or visit them online at www.211.ontario.ca. You may access 211 for reasons such as:

- Inquiring about various meal options in your community (ie. Meals on Wheels)
- Help to find housing
- Support to find employment
- Support to find a community legal clinic
- You need to see a dentist but can't afford one
- Community tax clinics

Health811

Connect with a registered nurse (RN) 24/7 for free, secure and confidential health advice. You may call 811 for reasons such as:

- You don't have a family doctor and need preventative cancer screening.
- You need to know where your closest walk-in clinic is.
- You are experiencing symptoms and need some medical advice on what to do.
- You would like to see your options for help in your home from Home & Community Care.

Central East Healthline

An online database to search for local health services, news, careers and events for Peterborough City and County.

You may visit www.centraleasthealthline.ca to search for topics such as:

- Local Healthcare Facilities
- Home Health & Community Supports
- Diseases & Conditions

Connex Ontario

Connex Ontario provides free and confidential health services information for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental illness or gambling. You can access them by phone (1-866-531-2600), Text CONNEX to 247247 or visit them online at www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/

Connex can :

- Provide contact information for mental health and addictions services or supports that meet the caller's specific needs
- Listen, offer support and provide strategies to help people meet their goals
- Provide basic education about gambling, drugs, alcohol, or mental health problems

The Ontario Caregiver Organization

Caregivers are ordinary people who provide physical and emotional support to a family member, partner, friend or neighbor. The Ontario Caregiver Organization (OCO) exists to support caregivers by providing one point of access to information so you have the support and resources you need in your role.

You may call 1-833-416-2273 or visit them online at www.ontariocaregiver.ca for live chat.

Peterborough Seniors Service Directory

A centralized directory of healthy aging services that can support seniors to live at home in the City and County of Peterborough and Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nations. You can use this directory by visiting www.Peterborough.ca/aging.

In this directory, you will find public and private community resources such as:

- Options for housing, such as retirement homes
- End of Life Care
- Transportation Options
- Social Clubs
- Personal Home Safety
- Falls and Injury Prevention

You can also call 705-748-8830 x. 3227 for more information.

Suggestions to help you navigate through the healthcare system:

Keep a folder for your medical information, including emergency contacts, important phone numbers or emails.

Keep a journal of symptoms, thoughts and questions.

Use a calendar, paper or digital, for important dates.

Have a clearly written out description of family history and past medical issues and conditions. See “Keeping Track of your Health Record” in the appendix for a sample to guide you.

Have a curious mind and be as patient as possible. Things may not happen the way you expect them to.

Accessing care

Primary Care Provider

A primary care provider is also known as your family doctor or nurse practitioner. They are often the “home” of your healthcare. Be sure that you know what your primary care provider’s hours are and what your options for after-hours are.



If you don't have a Primary Care Provider

Register with Health Care Connect

They will try to find a primary care provider for you. Then contact them each year to confirm that you are still without a primary care provider and that your contact information is still accurate.

Health Care Connect
Monday to Friday,
9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
ontario.ca/healthcareconnect
1- 800-445-1822.

Access Cancer Screening

If you do not have a primary care physician, call 811 for information on receiving routine cancer screening.

More information on Cancer Screening can be found on page 18 of this handbook.

Talk to friends, family and neighbours to see if their provider is accepting patients.

Virtual care

A way to connect with your healthcare provider using phone, video or messaging, instead of meeting them in person.

Virtual visits can be used to provide support and treatment recommendations, including prescriptions, prescription renewal, lab requisitions, some diagnostic services, etc.

Not all visits are suitable for virtual care.

To help you better understand virtual care, visit the Canadian Medical Association:

[Virtual Care Guide for Patients](https://bit.ly/3jqNwo0)
(<https://bit.ly/3jqNwo0>)

[Ministry checklist](https://bit.ly/3Y2q93c)
(<https://bit.ly/3Y2q93c>)

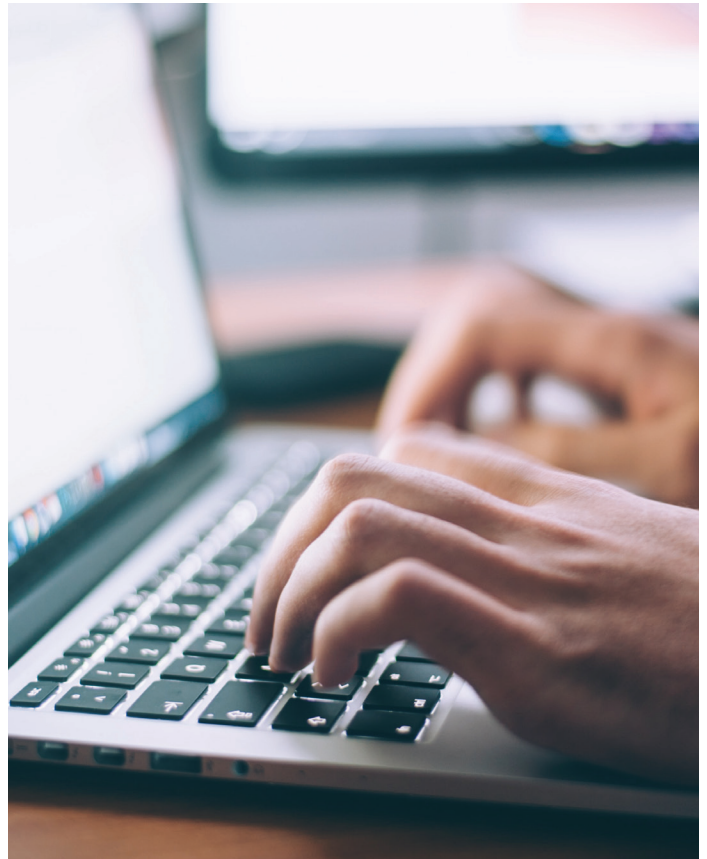


Accessing your records

The digital transformation in healthcare is evident with the number of patient portals (websites) to access your healthcare records. Make sure you ask your healthcare team today if there is a portal you can access.

In Peterborough you can access reports through the following:

- Hospital reports through [MyChart \(www.mychart.ourepic.ca\)](http://www.mychart.ourepic.ca) and [Pocket Health \(www.pockethealth.com\)](http://www.pockethealth.com)
- Lab results through [Life Labs](http://www.life-labs.com) and [Dynacare \(www.dynacare.ca\)](http://www.dynacare.ca)



Understanding your results

Reports are often in medical terms and hard to understand. My Pathology Report www.mypathologyreport.ca is a good place to start while you wait to review with your healthcare provider. It was created by doctors so patients could understand reports in plain language.



Cultural care

Your culture and experiences shape how you perceive the world. Culture influences:

- How you and your healthcare providers view health and illness.
- What you and your healthcare providers believe about the causes of disease.
- How illness and pain are experienced and expressed.
- How you seek help.
- How you interact with healthcare providers.

Your culture is important to your health. Work with your healthcare provider with an open mind to share your concerns.

If you have difficulty expressing yourself in English, ask your healthcare provider to speak slowly and to write down the information for you to look at.

You can also ask for language support through an interpreter from your healthcare provider.

Try not to rely on a family member or friend to give you the information. Your health information is private and an interpreter is trained to deliver the information to you and maintain your confidentiality.

If a professional interpreter is not available, you can also try to communicate through a translation app like Google Translate.



Appointments

It is important for you and your healthcare provider to work together to take care of your health needs. Asking questions is key to good communication.

Here are some tips to help before you attend your appointment.

- Prepare a few questions that you want to ask. Put the questions that are most important to you at the top of your list.
- Have a list of your symptoms, when they started and any relevant history. Write down what you are currently doing to manage your symptoms. What helps and what makes it worse?
- Consider any relevant family history.
- If you don't understand any terms that you hear, ask for clarification in plain language.
- Be honest, don't be afraid to bring up anything that is bothering you, even if it feels embarrassing.
- If you need hearing aids, glasses, a cane or walker be sure to bring them with you to your appointment.
- Always take a list of medications you are currently taking, both prescription and over-the-counter non-prescription medications and supplements.

Appointments are a great time to bring an advocate with you; they can be a second set of ears, ask questions, and take notes.

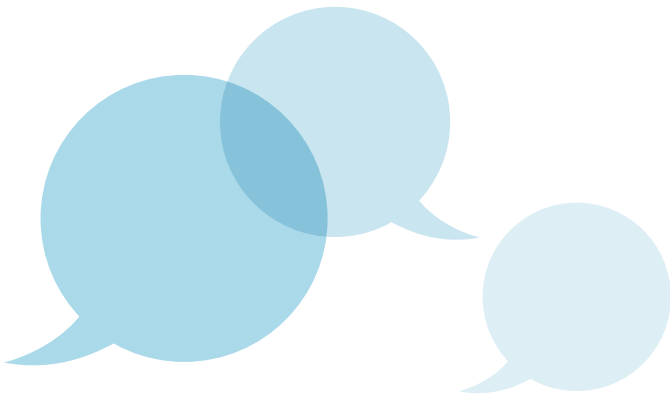


Tests and procedures

Here are some questions that you could ask about any tests and procedures being recommended.

Ask:

- ? Why do I need the test or procedure? Why is it important?
- ? Is there information on the test, procedure, or issue under investigation that I can review?
- ? What are the steps involved in the test or procedure? What will I experience?
- ? What will my recovery be like? Will I have to take any pain medications during or after the procedure? Will I need home care afterwards? How is that arranged?
- ? Does OHIP cover the cost? How much is covered?
- ? Are there any risks or side effects with undergoing the test or procedure?
- ? What are the risks of not having the test or procedure?
- ? Is there any preparation, such as fasting, required?
- ? Can medications still be taken or should they be held off until after the test or procedure is over?
- ? Am I able to drive or will I need to arrange for a driver?
- ? How will I get the test results and approximately how long is the wait?
- ? What is the plan for follow-up, should I call their office, or wait for them to call?



Medications

You may be prescribed medication to manage your health issues. Medication can include prescribed, over-the-counter, vitamins, and supplements.

Here are some tips around medications:

- Keep a list of your current medications in your wallet, along with your pharmacy name and contact information. You can use the “Medication Tracker” found in the appendix.
- When your healthcare provider prescribes a new medication or a refill, this is a great time to ask questions.
- ? Be sure that you understand why you are taking the medication.**
- ? Find out what side effects the medication has and what you should do if you experience any of them.**
- ? Ask how often you should take the medication and for how long.**
- ? Ask if there are any tests you will need to monitor this medication.**

Your pharmacist is a great source of information about your medications. Here are some things you might want to know:

- ? Will the medication work safely with any other medications you are taking or with any over-the-counter medications, such as cold medications, or vitamins?**
- ? Should you take the medication with food?**
- ? What time of day should you take the medication?**
- ? Can the pharmacy dispense your medications in daily dose blister packs?**
- If you cannot pick up your prescription, ask your pharmacy to deliver it to you.
- If you start a new medication that is prescribed to you by someone other than your primary care provider, be sure to update your primary care provider at your next visit.
- Review your prescription medications with your primary care provider at least once a year. Confirm that it is still the best medication for your condition.

Is your urgency an emergency?

Calling 911 for an ambulance is not always the right call to get access to the right care. Please consider the other treatment options available and make the call that best meets your needs.

Unsure if it's an emergency?

Call Health811 to speak to a registered nurse 24/7.

To help you decide whether your urgency is an emergency, please visit Peterborough County website, www.ptbocounty.ca/en/living/it-s-your-call.aspx

Is your urgency an emergency?



STOP

Would self-care make you better.



THINK

Consider all services and options available.



CALL

For all life-threatening emergencies, call 911.

Should I go to the ED?

The Emergency Department is ready to help you with these and other emergencies:

A broken bone or a wound that needs stitches.

Chest pain or tightness in the chest.

Difficulty breathing when doing very little or resting.

Infant under 3 months with a fever over 38.5°C (101°F) or has a fever and is difficult to wake.

Sudden severe headache, weakness, vision problems, numbness/tingling, trouble speaking, dizziness.

Continuous vomiting or severe diarrhea with signs of dehydration.

Confusion and disorientation.

Seizures or convulsions.

Stiff neck and sensitivity to light.

Mental health crisis.

Navigating mental health and addictions services

Locally, you have options for when you are in need of support for mental health and/or substance use concerns.

- Connex Ontario
- Contact your doctor or nurse practitioner, this includes after-hours support
- Health811 to speak to a Registered Nurse, 24/7
- 211
- More information for Connex, 211 and Health811 can be found on page 7.

If you are experiencing a mental health crisis or addiction-related crisis:

Contact Four Counties Crisis at 705-745-6484 or toll free 1-866-995-9933 to access 24-hour, free, confidential crisis support (you may have to leave a message and wait for a return call).

If you or someone else needs immediate help or is in danger of harm, visit the Emergency Department or call 911.

Cancer screening

Organized screening programs may find cancer earlier, leading to better health outcomes. Cancer screening detects pre-cancerous changes, or cancer at an early stage when there is a better chance of treating it successfully. Screening is for people who do not have any cancer symptoms.

Breast

Regular breast cancer screening can find cancer when it is small and there is a better chance of treating it successfully.

Lung

Screening can find some lung cancers early, when treatment has a better chance of working.

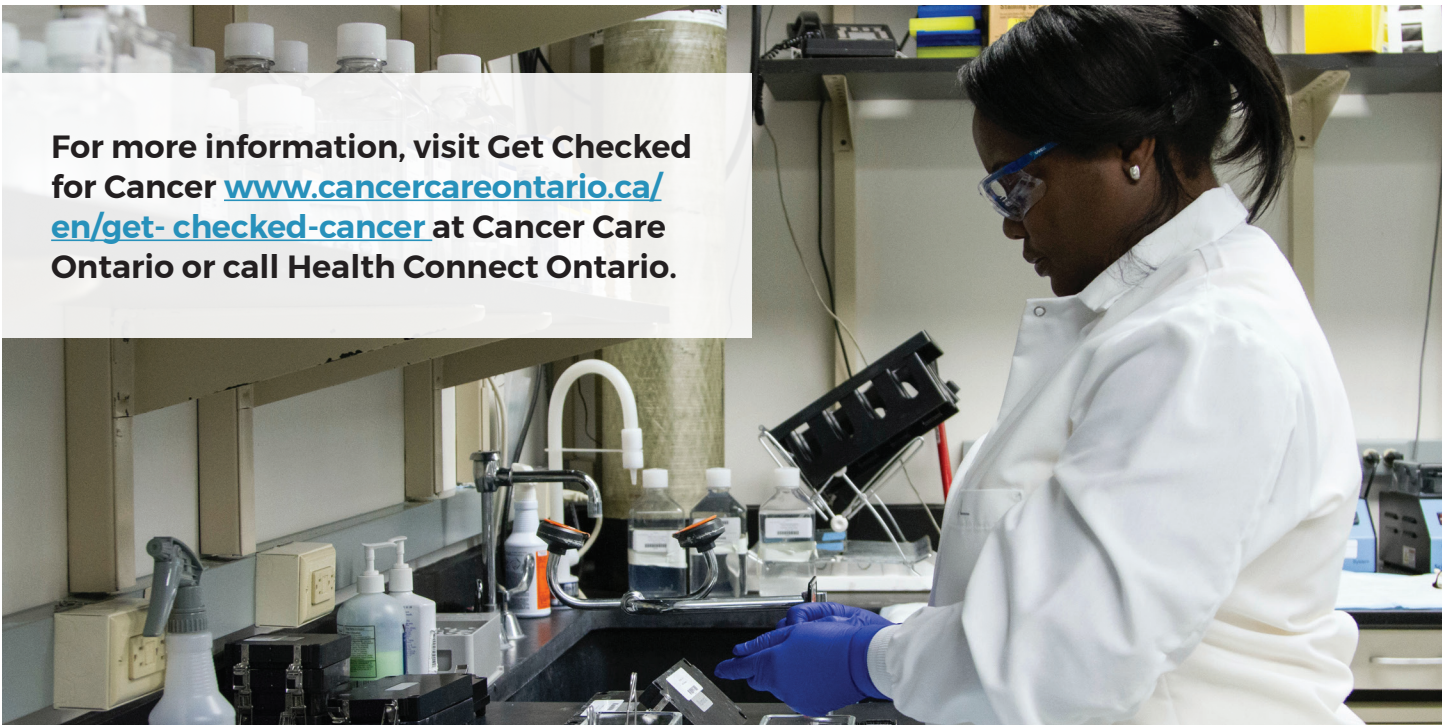
Cervical

Cervical cancer is almost entirely preventable with regular screening, appropriate and timely follow-up of abnormal Pap test results and human papillomavirus (HPV) immunization.

Colorectal

When colorectal cancer is caught early enough through screening, someone with the disease has a 9 out of 10 chance of being cured.

Your primary care provider can arrange any of these four (4) tests for you. It is important to note that you can access these tests even if you do not have a primary care provider. Call Health811 to set up an appointment.



For more information, visit Get Checked for Cancer www.cancercareontario.ca/en/get-checked-cancer at Cancer Care Ontario or call Health Connect Ontario.

End of life care

As we approach end-of-life, there are many options for you to explore if you wish.

Hospice Palliative Care

- Palliative care is a specialized form of healthcare for individuals and families who are living with a life-limiting illness.
- The goal of palliative care is to provide comfort and dignity for the person living with the illness, as well as the best quality of life for both this person and their family.
- For more information, check out Canadian Hospice Palliative Care www.chpca.ca or Hospice Peterborough www.hospicepeterborough.org

Dying with Dignity

- Canadian law, Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/medical-assistance-dying.html
- For more information, check out Dying with Dignity Canada www.dyingwithdignity.ca

How can I access palliative care?

Palliative care can be provided or accessed through the following channels:

- 1 Your primary healthcare provider.
Many types of palliative care are provided directly by primary healthcare providers who are already treating individuals for disease.

For individuals requiring more specialized services, primary healthcare providers can provide appropriate referrals.

- 2 Home and Community Care Support Services can refer you to hospice or provide other support services.
- 3 Your local hospital.
- 4 Your long-term care home.

Where is palliative care provided?

Palliative care is delivered in all care settings, including the following:

- Individual homes
- Hospices
- Long-term care homes
- Hospitals

Care transitions

You may receive healthcare in a hospital, a clinic or in your own home. It is important to be prepared for changes as you deal with different people in different locations

Here are some suggestions that may help you:

Admitted to hospital

Make sure you know who the providers are on your care team

Discharged from hospital

Make sure that you have a clear discharge plan before you leave the hospital

Receiving home care

Make sure you know who is coming into your home and why.

It is important to be actively involved in your care during transitions. Ensure your care team understands your circumstances.

Questions to ASK

When is the discharge/transfer going to happen?

What services will be needed at home or where I am going?

Who/what are they and when are they coming?

- Equipment
- Supplies
- Professional care
- Personal care

Who can I call if I have questions or concerns?

When will there be a follow-up appointment, where and with who?

See “My Care Team and Support Contact List” in the appendix for a worksheet

Information to SHARE

- People who should be included in discharge planning (family, friends, caregivers)
- What does my home look like (house, apartment, stairs)
- If you have a primary care provider to provide follow-up (are they local or out of town)

Care in the community

You may receive OHIP funded services in your home based on an assessment by a Case Coordinator from **Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS)** that could include:

- Professional services such as nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work.
- Supplies and equipment.
- Some personal support worker (PSW) services to assist you with bathing.

If OHIP-funded services are not available, here are some resources:

Home Care

- You can privately pay for professional services, personal support services, equipment and supplies.
- Some private health insurance policies will cover these costs.

Equipment

- You may need some support from a piece of equipment, such as a walker, raised toilet seat, wheelchair, cane, bath/shower chair or stool, a hospital bed, and many more.

- Assessment from a physiotherapist or occupational therapist can be requested through HCCSS or a local medical equipment store. This assessment will help you in finding the right piece of equipment for your home and your budget.
- There is funding through government programs that can assist with covering the costs.
- Connect with your local Community Care program to ask if they have any equipment rentals, as they often do.

Community Care Peterborough

Community Care Peterborough offers access to programs and services such as: Meals on Wheels, transportation, safety at home, health and wellness.

www.commcareptbo.org

Ask someone on your care team or one of the organizations listed in Points of Entry (found on page 7) to help you find your best option.

Housing

What happens when you or your loved one feel you can no longer remain in your home?

To discuss options, you can call Home and Community Care Support Services and ask to speak with the intake coordinator.

Your primary care provider can assist you to determine what available options are most suited to your needs.

To explore options for housing you can call 211 or visit the Senior Service Directory at www.peterborough.ca/aging



Caregiving

Being a caregiver can be challenging physically and emotionally. You can develop your own health issues as a result and may need support to manage the care of your loved one.

Here are some things that may help you:

- Make sure that you are involved in the care planning of your loved one.
- Identify yourself to the care team, let them know the role you are able to play in your loved one's care.
- Understand what tasks you will be required to perform. Ask for step-by-step direction.

Ask:

- For more information about the health issue your loved one is dealing with
- How best to support your loved one
- What supports or resources are available to you as the caregiver

Caregiver burnout

Caregiver burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. It may be accompanied by a change in attitude, from positive and caring to negative and unconcerned.

Burnout can occur when caregivers don't get the help they need, or if they try to do more than they are able, physically or financially.

The symptoms of caregiver burnout are similar to the symptoms of stress and depression:

- Withdrawal from friends, family and other loved ones.
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed.
- Feeling blue, irritable, hopeless and helpless.
- Changes in appetite, weight or both.
- Changes in sleep patterns.
- Getting sick more often.
- Feelings of wanting to hurt yourself or the person that you are caring for.
- Emotional and physical exhaustion.
- Irritability.

Support groups

Support groups are not only great connections to share experiences with someone else going through a similar experience, but to connect you with financial supports such as bursaries, or tax rebates.

Support groups can be either led by a facilitator or by someone who has lived experience.

Support groups exist for:

- Health conditions, such as Arthritis or Parkinson's disease
- Grief and bereavement
- New parents
- Family/loved ones of people with mental illness or substance dependence

To find out what is available in the community, you can start with one of the resources below:

- 211
- www.centraleasthealthline.ca. Click on *health topics - diseases and conditions*

The internet

The internet does not replace medical advice. Ensure that you consult with your healthcare team when looking things up online.

Your healthcare team is a great place to start when asking where you can learn more about something. They will be able to guide you to resources and/or credible websites.

Here are some trusted websites:

- Health Canada
- Health Connect Ontario – Medical Library
- Public Health Ontario
- Heart & Stroke Foundation
- Ontario Shores
- Alzheimers Society of Ontario
- Cancer Care Ontario
- Sick Kids

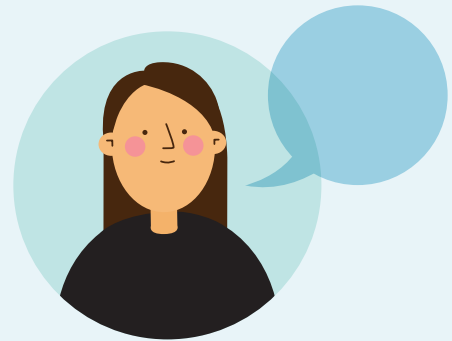
Learning from your experience

Patient Experience

Many health organizations offer feedback surveys where you can comment on your care experience. These are often looked at to understand what you went through and whether you have any suggested improvements to care. Make sure you ask for a survey if one is not offered to you. Your feedback helps to ensure those making health decisions understand the needs of those they are serving.

Patient Engagement

Many health organizations have now created volunteer opportunities for patient and family advisors to actively participate in designing and implementing programs, projects, and policies. Ask the organizations who are providing your care if you can get involved to share your experiences and ideas about where opportunities for improvement may exist. The knowledge that patients and caregivers provide can ensure health organizations are in-tune with patient needs and values.



Remember, you have the right to know and the right to ask questions when it comes to your health.

Your voice is important! Speaking up will make sure that your voice is part of the care that your healthcare team provides for you.

Acknowledgement

This document was inspired by work done by the Oxford OHT Patient & Family Advisory Team.

The Patient, Family and Caregiver Declaration of Values for Ontario was referenced when creating this handbook. These values are accountability, empathy and compassion, equity and engagement, respect and dignity, and transparency.

For more details, visit www.ontario.ca/page/patient-family-caregiver-declaration-values-ontario

Thank you

We wish to acknowledge and thank the members of Peterborough's OHT Patient & Family Advisory Committee for their work in making this guide possible.

Feedback

We want to know what you think! Was the handbook helpful? Would you suggest any improvements? Please complete a survey by visiting www.peterboroughoht.ca.

If you would like a paper copy, please reach out to one of the organizations who are a part of the Peterborough OHT.

Appendix

If you would like additional copies of the worksheets on the following pages, please visit www.peterborought.ca.

Going home worksheet

Take this worksheet with you when going into the hospital.
It will help you prepare for your discharge home.

When is the discharge going to happen?

Date: _____ Time: _____

How am I leaving? _____

Who is picking me up? _____

What services will I need at home?

Service	How will they be coming?	Delivery Date
Equipment:		
Supplies:		
Personal Care:		

Who can I call if I have questions or concerns? _____

Are my medications changed? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Ask for a copy of current medications.

Will I need a follow up appointment? ☐ YES ☐ NO

When? _____

Where? _____

With Whom? _____

Do I need to stop and get new prescriptions? ☐ YES ☐ No

Do I have groceries at home? ☐ YES ☐ No



My care team and support contact list

Name: _____ Organization: _____
Role of Person: _____ Reason to Call: _____
Phone: _____ Other contact (email): _____
Hours Available: _____

Name: _____ Organization: _____
Role of Person: _____ Reason to Call: _____
Phone: _____ Other contact (email): _____
Hours Available: _____

Name: _____ Organization: _____
Role of Person: _____ Reason to Call: _____
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Hours Available: _____

Name: _____ Organization: _____
Role of Person: _____ Reason to Call: _____
Phone: _____ Other contact (email): _____
Hours Available: _____



Keeping track of your health record

This can be used as a template for before, during and after your appointments with your healthcare team. This can be used for yourself or by an advocate.

Medical History

Family history
Mother's side:
Father's side:
Diagnosis:
<i>*look at Electronic medical records</i>

Before Your Appointment

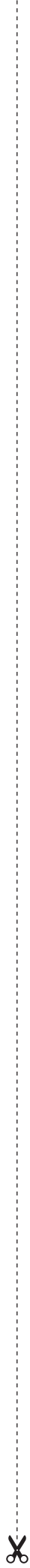
Appointment date and time:
Reason for visit
Current symptoms
Questions or concerns to ask
Reminders <i>*list from workbook?</i> <i>*bring your medication sheet</i>

During Your Appointment

Weight:	lbs/kg (circle)	Up or down since last visit? <input type="checkbox"/> UP <input type="checkbox"/> DOWN
Blood pressure:	/	
Prescriptions:		
Follow up? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	When?	
Referrals? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	Who?	
When should I expect to hear from them?	Date:	
Notes:		

After Your Appointment





Medication tracker

Use this chart to make a list of any medications you are taking (prescribed, over the counter and supplements/vitamins). Take this chart with you to appointments to discuss and review with your health care team.

[illegible]

PETERBOROUGH
Ontario Health Team

Patient, Family, and Caregiver
Advisory Committee

Learn more!

For more information, please visit
www.peterboroughoht.ca and click on
general inquiries at the bottom of the homepage.

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