

Chronic Illness

Supporting a co-worker through chronic illness: Brought to you by Aurora EAP



More than one-third of adults age 18 to 65 have at least one chronic condition. Illnesses such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes are the leading cause of disability in the United States. Chances are you or someone you work with may have been impacted.

Our work relationships are often a significant part of the fabric of our lives. Many of us spend more waking hours at work than at home. When a co-worker is diagnosed with cancer or other chronic illness, we are often left wondering, "What should I say?" or "How can I help?" The extent of your support depends upon the nature of your relationship prior to their diagnosis.

Here are some suggestions that may help:

DO:

- Respect your co-workers' need to share or their need for privacy
- Listen without judging or cheerleading; let them know you care
- Include the person in usual work projects, plans, and social events
- Check before doing something for your co-worker, no matter how helpful you think you are being
- Offer to help in concrete, specific ways: making meals, donating PTO, etc.

DON'T:

- Offer advice they don't ask for, or be judgmental
- Assume your co-worker no longer can do the job; they need to feel like a valuable contributing member of the company or department
- Tell your co-worker, "I can imagine how you must feel"
- Cheerlead, "It's not that bad ... you'll feel better tomorrow"

For more information, please call Aurora EAP at:
(800) 236-3231