

BREAKING THE GEOGRAPHICAL BARRIERS FOR GETTING YOU THE CARE YOU NEED

A Toolkit For Patients



We see you. We hear you. We've got you covered.

Where you live can impact your access to care, quality of care and even, the ease to live a healthier lifestyle. Your zip code can even determine your likelihood of getting breast cancer in your lifetime.

Whether you are newly diagnosed or going through treatment, the distance that you live from medical facilities can pose a real challenge. We have developed this toolkit to provide you with the information and resources that you need to break through geographical challenges.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Awareness around the impact of your location is important as it can help you to anticipate some challenges that you may face. Awareness provides you with the foundation you need to navigate the challenge and create solutions. You may be located far from a care center, having a plan before hand to account for appointments and emergencies will help to provide peace of mind, better care and safety for you.





PATIENT CONSIDERATIONS

Tele-oncology/Telehealth

Limited access to health centers due to longer distances can be improved with the options of telehealth or tele-oncology. Chiron defines Tele-oncology as the application of telemedicine in cancer care, including diagnostics, treatment, and supportive care.¹ Benefits to tele-oncology include:

- Increases access to care for you
- Options to management of treatment side effects,
- Major impact on treatment outcomes
- Quality of life improvement

If you have access to the internet and a phone line, you may have access to these options. Through the phone and video conferencing you can have access to your healthcare team without the travel. Consult with your doctor and insurance provider to see if they offer telehealth options.



BUNDLE APPOINTMENTS

If telehealth is not an option or if it is being used in conjunction with your treatment plan, work with your healthcare provider and your medical team to bundle appointments on the same day in order to decrease the number of trips that you will need to make. Coordinating care to optimize healthcare costs can be prohibitive with or without insurance. Traveling long distances can add to financial and emotional strain.

Discuss your transportation challenges with your entire healthcare team and together, work with them to create a treatment schedule that works for you.



DIET

Food deserts

You guessed it, your diet too can depend on where you live. Access to healthy and nutritious foods are scarce in some areas. Food deserts are described as geographic areas where residents' access to affordable, healthy food options (especially fresh fruits and vegetables) is restricted or nonexistent due to the absence of grocery stores within a convenient traveling distance.² In food deserts, it may be a challenge to find nutrient rich foods to incorporate into your diet.

If this applies to you, when purchasing food from stores and restaurants that you have access to, look for healthy alternatives. Even fast-food restaurants have healthier alternatives and legislation has passed for them to be more transparent with nutritional facts. Fastfoodnutrition.org is a great tool to help you check nutritional facts for some of the most popular restaurants.

Fruits & Vegetables

Consider securing large amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables and freezing them if you do not have access to them regularly. Try to stay away from canned fruits and vegetables as the aluminum containers contain toxins as covered in our Environmental Toxins Toolkit.

Before you freeze the fruits and vegetables, the University of Georgia recommends blanching (scalding vegetables in boiling water or steam for a short period of time) is a must for almost all vegetables to be frozen. Blanching slows or stops the action of enzymes that can cause loss of flavor, color and texture. Blanching cleanses the surface of dirt and organisms, brightens the color and helps slows the loss of vitamins.³ Blanching also wilts or softens vegetables and makes them easier to pack. Freezing your fruits and vegetables can help to preserve them for months to come.

Pesticides

Pesticides are used to protect plants from insects, animals and even mold and mildew. It helps to prevent the spread of bacteria.⁴ While pesticides have great benefit, they are also EDCs. Overtime from farm to your grocery store, pesticide levels do decrease allowing them to be well under the legal limit.⁵ While the risks are reduced, this does still leave you with some risk.

To reduce the risk of ingesting pesticides:

- Wash your fruits and vegetables before you eat it
- Think about growing your own fruits and vegetables
- Try eating organic when you can



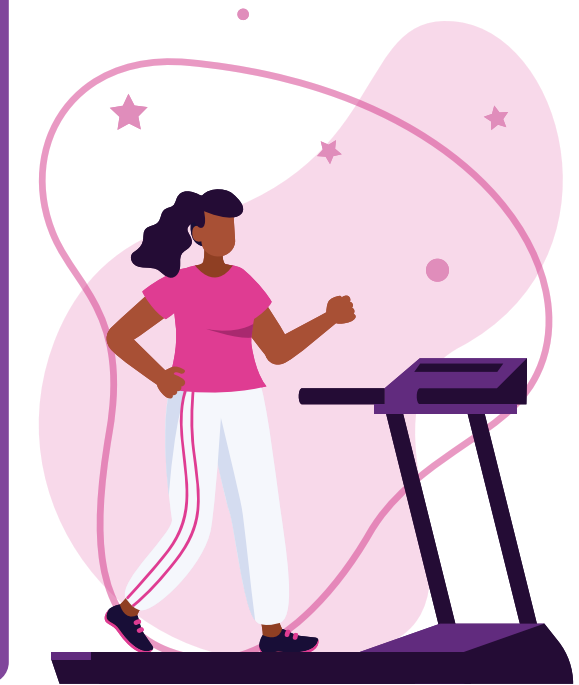


EXERCISE

Access to public parks, open spaces, bike/walking paths may be limited. If you do not have access to parks for outdoor exercise, consider indoor workouts. If there is a gym nearby, you can ask in house personal trainers for programs they recommend. Additionally, if you have internet access, you can use it as a resource for free workout plans. You can take classes online for nearly any type of workout you are looking for. Below are a few of our favorites:

- [Tigerlily PureCat Program](#)
- [MrandMrsMuscle](#)
- [Afrifitness – Dance](#)

Lastly, do not underestimate the power of walking. If you have an errand to run nearby, consider walking or biking as opposed to another means of transportation.



THE ENVIRONMENT

Living in urban areas with higher air pollution from burning fuel can be a hazard to health. Chemicals like Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) have been linked to breast cancer⁵ and are a known carcinogen (cancer causing agent). PAHs can be found in fuel emissions in diesel vehicles and therefore air pollution, and contaminated soil. PAHs can also be developed due to the burning of coal, tobacco, charbroiled and even smoked meat.⁶

To decrease your exposure to PAHs, try to avoid charbroiled or smoked meats, tobacco, and even when planting or starting a garden, using a bed of soil (purchased) as opposed to the soil in your yard may be a better option for you. While there are testing kits available to test your soil at your local hardware store, often times they do not test for no more than a few chemicals.



TRAVEL

Travel can be a bit of a challenge when health centers are not nearby. American Cancer Society's Road to Recovery program provides transportation to appointments at no cost to you. Subsequently, be sure to talk to your health center to see if they have resources for travel as well. Your doctor should be able to point you in the right direction. Additionally, don't forget to call you town or city hall to see if there are any community resources available to you. Lastly, consult with your insurance provider to see if your policy covers transportation.



QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM

Telehealth

- Do you recommend telehealth for me?
- Do you have telehealth options?
- How does this work?
- How often do we “meet”?
- For how long do we meet?
- What are my responsibilities before, during and after each appointment?
- Do you still coordinate with my other doctors and specialists?
- What if I have a bad connection and we get cut off? What happens next?
- How do I schedule my appointments?
- Will the care be just as good as it is in person?
- Is this covered by insurance?
- How much does this cost?
- Does this replace our in person appointments?
- Can you issue me prescriptions through telehealth?
- What previous experience do you have with telehealth?
- What do I need to make this work the best?



Bundling Appointments

- Can we work together with all of my doctors to bundle appointments on the same day?
- Do you offer discounts or vouchers for parking?
- Do you offer discounted transportation to and from the hospital?
- Do you know of any programs that offer discounted transportation to and from my appointments?

Lifestyle

- What exercises do you recommend for me?
- How many days a week do you recommend I exercise
- What Should my diet consist of?
- How many times a day should I be eating
- What should my water intake look like?
- Can you provide me with an example of a healthy diet for me?
- What workout programs do you recommend?

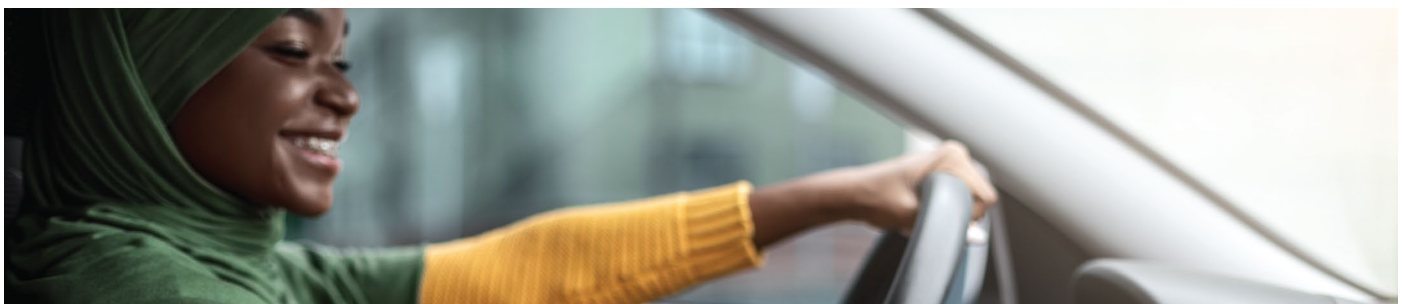
TIPS AT A GLANCE

Bundle appointments. Cut down on number of trips and need for transportation by bundling multiple appointments in one day.

Explore virtual care. Technology is advancing, and if you have access to the internet or a phone, virtual care could be an option for some of your appointments.

Freeze those fruits and veggies. If you have the opportunity to purchase fruits and veggies, consider freezing them for preservation. Don't forget to blanch them first.

When in doubt, ask. Consult your medical care team for any questions that you may have about your health. Consider asking them for resources that will help to make your life easier when distance is a challenge.



RESOURCES

At Tigerlily we are committed to providing you with the most up to date information along with resources to help you on your journey. We know that this is a challenging time and we want to provide you with resources not only Tigerlily offers, but also our partners. Check out our Toolkit page to find additional resources available to you.

1. <https://chironhealth.com/blog/telemedicines-role-cancer-treatment/>
2. <https://foodispower.org/access-health/food-deserts/>
3. https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/uga/uga_freeze_veg.pdf

4. <https://www.healthandenvironment.org/uploads-old/PAHs.pdf>
5. <https://www.cancernetwork.com/view/challenges-rural-cancer-care-united-states>
6. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25827652/>