

# Your Health Matters

## MEDICAL CATASTROPHE

A loved one crumples to the floor in pain. You rush for the phone to call 9-1-1. You listen anxiously for the wail of ambulance sirens – where are they? What’s taking so long? A knot of fear grips your heart – what could be wrong? The fear turns to shock when you hear the test results and the heart-wrenching diagnosis – cancer, a brain tumor, diabetes, paralysis.

In time, medical catastrophe strikes all of us – a parent, a grandparent, a child, a spouse, a friend, yourself. What can you do when you feel your world turning upside down?

Although each person responds differently to crisis, here are a few suggestions from people who are surviving or have survived through a medical catastrophe.

**Learn all you can about your diagnosis.** The sooner you understand what is happening to your body and what you need to do in response, the sooner you can begin to be proactive in fighting back.

**Educate your friends and family about your diagnosis.** When you are ready to talk about your diagnosis, share information with the people who love you most. If they are going to be able to help you, they need to understand the truth about what is happening.

**Be your own advocate.** Push your health care provider team to give you the best possible care. Although they are experts in their field, no one cares about your health as much as you do. Speak up. Ask questions. Research and make recommendations. Make your own decisions, based on expert advice.

**Follow the medical plan.** Once you’ve made decisions with your health care team about what you need to do – start doing it! Choose to focus less on what might happen in the future – good or bad – and focus on today. Do everything you can to stay as healthy as you can, even if it means giving up old habits and starting new ones.

**Connect with others that share your diagnosis.** You are not alone. Reach out to other people who have experienced the same challenges you will face. Listen to their stories. Draw encouragement and hope and peace from their experiences.

Facing a medical catastrophe will not be easy, but perhaps the suggestions above will help ease the way.

The Montgomery County Health Department loves taking care of your family, and works every day to protect, promote and improve health in our community. To learn more, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at [www.montgomerycountyhealth.org](http://www.montgomerycountyhealth.org) or on Facebook or Twitter @healthyMOCO. ■



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