Tips on How to Be Your Own Advocate

• Use your Bag It My Companion Guidebook to stay organized, track your own information, and as a handy source for reliable resources.

• Assemble and work closely with all the members of your healthcare team who have your best interests in mind. (see healthcare team definitions on page 4)

• Educate yourself about your specific cancer so you can make informed decisions about your treatment and care. (see Questions to ask your healthcare team on page 10)

• Visit only reliable websites for cancer information. (see Resources section of My Companion Guidebook)

• Thoroughly understand your health insurance policy.

• Request copies of all of your medical records and test results to store in My Companion Guidebook. You can refer back to them and provide as a back-up copy in case they get lost.

• Ask lots of questions – about your cancer diagnosis, treatment options, possible side effects, and available resources for yourself and your loved ones. (see questions to ask your healthcare team on pages 10 and 21)

• Bring someone with you to every appointment and let them know how they can help you.

• Use the My Appointments Summary Log found in My Companion Guidebook to write down your questions in advance of appointments. Make sure you fully understand the answers provided and take notes.

• Take an active role in managing your care. Consider getting a second opinion.

• Express fully and honestly what you need and want—to your healthcare team, caregivers, family members, and friends.

• Keep your healthcare team updated on any changes in your health. Fully and promptly report symptoms and side effects during and after treatment.

• When challenges arise, problem solve and negotiate to achieve your goals and ensure you have the best care and support you need.

• Ask others for help. Having a loved one or friend advocate on your behalf is a form of self-advocacy.