

Healthy Living Newsletter

A MedWatch publication to keep you healthy and informed.



Celebrating and Supporting Family Caregivers

November is National Family Caregivers Month, so we are raising awareness of caregiving issues and providing suggestions to support caregivers.



Serving as a Family Caregiver

Serving as a caregiver for a family member is an extremely rewarding experience. Not only do you get to spend time with your loved one, you also ensure they receive the best quality care possible. But just what do caregivers do? Read below to find out!

What Is a Family Caregiver?

Put simply, a family caregiver is someone who cares for a loved one with a short-term or long-term physical and/or mental disability or illness. This could include taking care of an aging parent, a handicapped spouse, or a child with ongoing health concerns. Day after day, you gift your loved one your care and attention, improving their quality of life, even if they're unable to express their gratitude.

What Are Caregiver Responsibilities?

Caregivers provide different kinds of assistance based on the needs of their loved one. Some typical tasks care recipients rely on include:

- Help to shop and buy groceries
- Prepare meals, clean house, or do laundry
- Help with daily living activities like dressing, bathing, and administering medications
- Aid with transferring the recipient in and out of bed
- Assist with physical therapy, injections, feeding tubes, or other medical processes
- Arrange medical appointments and transportation to the doctor
- Order and pick up medications at the pharmacy
- Discuss the care plan and needs with doctors and other care managers
- Respond to a crisis or medical emergency

How Can I Be a Good Caregiver?

- Learn as much as you can about your family member's illness or disability and how to care for it
- Talk with your loved one about their healthcare wishes and, if appropriate, complete a Durable Powers of Attorney for finances and healthcare proxy in case of emergencies
- Get the entire family involved and discuss needed services, how other family members can help, and develop an overall plan for care
- Locate community resources like adult day care services and meal delivery for relief and respite for family caregivers
- Ask for help and support when you need it to avoid feelings of isolation, anxiety, and burnout
- Encourage your loved one's independence whenever possible
- Trust your instincts and listen to your gut while also taking heed from doctors and specialists—you know your family member best!



Check out our list of Caregiver Resources below!



Caregiving Fast Facts

<p>10 Hours of Care 58% of caregivers provide more than 10 hours of care each week</p>	<p>1 in 4 Caregivers who say family relationships suffer because of caregiving responsibilities</p>
<p>16% of caregivers quit their job to care for a loved one</p>	<p>61% of family caregivers are women</p>
<p>30% of caregivers said they need help keeping their loved one safe</p>	<p>42% of caregivers spend over \$5,000 annually to care for a loved one</p>

Taking Care of the Caregiver

It can be easy to become overwhelmed by the daily grind of caregiving—which is why it's vital that you take care of your own needs while looking after your loved ones. Caregivers need care, too!

- Take time to relax daily. Learn how to regulate yourself and de-stress when you start to feel overwhelmed.
- Talk with someone. There's no better way of relieving stress than spending time face-to-face with someone who cares about you.
- Feed your spirit. Try meditation or other activities that make you feel part of something greater. Try to find meaning in both your life and in your role as a caregiver.
- Monitor your mental health. Watch out for signs of depression, anxiety, or burnout and seek professional help if needed.
- Stay social. Make it a priority to visit regularly with other people. Nurture your close relationships. Don't let yourself become isolated.
- Join a support group. A support group can provide validation and encouragement, as well as problem-solving strategies for difficult situations.
- Do things you enjoy. Laughter and joy can help keep you going when you face trials, stress, and pain.
- Maintain balance in your life. Don't give up activities that are important to you, such as your work or hobbies.
- Exercise regularly. Try to get in at least 30 minutes of exercise, three times per week. Exercise is a great way to relieve stress and boost your energy.
- Eat right. Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress and get through busy days. Keep your energy up and your mind clear by eating nutritious meals at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Get enough sleep. Aim for an average of eight hours of solid, uninterrupted sleep every night. Otherwise, your energy level, productivity, and ability to handle stress will suffer.

Nutrition Corner

6 MEAL PLANNING TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

Coordinating healthy menu options that address a loved one's specific health concerns can be challenging for caregivers. While proper nutrition is vital for everyone, maintaining a healthy eating plan for seniors or individuals coping with one or multiple chronic conditions like COPD, congestive heart failure or diabetes can be especially complicated. Here are six tips to consider as you help coordinate your loved one's meals:

- 1. Plan Together.** Schedule meals in one-week increments, keeping your loved one involved and preparing a comprehensive grocery list.
- 2. Cook Together.** Cooking meals with your loved one is a wonderful way to keep them active and engaged. It may be easiest to make all meals for the week during one weekend cooking session.
- 3. Maximize Leftovers.** Make your meals go even further by planning leftovers ahead of time. Use individual containers to package leftovers and label them with suggested meal dates and times.
- 4. Keep Snacks Handy.** Keeping fresh fruits and vegetables prepared and at the ready is an effective way to have healthy food choices available at all times.
- 5. Be Creative.** It's not uncommon for the elderly to experience diminished taste or smell—so exercise your creativity by developing imaginative meal choices that feature flavorful combinations.
- 6. Get Help.** Trying to find common ground and address your loved one's dietary needs and desires can be demanding for caregivers. Ask for help if you're feeling overwhelmed or confused!

Caregiver Resources

There are many organizations that help family caregivers cope with the service they provide. Here are some of those organizations:

- **Family Caregiver Alliance – www.caregiver.org**
Family Caregiver Alliance seeks to improve the quality of life for caregivers through education, services, research, and advocacy.
- **AARP Resources for Family Caregivers – www.aarp.org**
AARP provides education and advocacy for family caregivers.
- **Administration for Community Living – www.acl.gov**
A government department for caregiver support groups, respite providers, and other caregiving services.
- **Eldercare Locator – www.eldercare.acl.gov**
A public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging, connecting you to services for older adults and their families.
- **ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center – www.archrespite.org**
The ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center assists and promotes the development of quality respite and crisis care programs.
- **Aging Care – www.agingcare.com**
Aging Care is devoted to providing families with the information and resources they need to care for their loved ones so they can enjoy their time together more and worry less.

Newsletter Sources: Residential Health Care Group, helpguide.org, bayada.com, agingcare.com

Your Total Lifestyle Coach (TLC) is your personal 'health advocate'.

For more information, additional tools, and resources to help you improve and maintain your health, call (800) 386-5475.

Thank you for subscribing to MedWatch's Healthy Living newsletter! We hope you enjoyed the content and found it to be a valuable resource.

For more great healthcare information, please click on the link below to view the latest edition of the Cancer Treatment Centers of America newsletter.

