

Caregiver Self-Care

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Overview

- The stress of caregiving, and its effects on your health and well-being
- Managing stress and finding relief
- Key resources to protect your health

Caregiver Stress

- Stress can be physical, emotional, social, etc.
- Signs and symptoms can include:
 - Feeling overwhelmed or alone
 - Sleep problems, feeling tired, anger
 - Weight changes, body aches
 - Being worried and sad

The Office on Women's Health, U.S Department of Health and Human Services (2015). [Caregiver stress](#).

The Importance of Self-Care

- Most important rule of caregiving
- A healthy caregiver provides better care.
- Caregiving takes stamina, strategy and help.
- Personal barriers may prevent better care.
 - Unrealistic expectations
 - New physical and mental health problems develop
 - Existing problems get worse

*Adapted from Family Caregiver Alliance, National Center on Caregiving (2017).
[Caregiver Education](#).

Addressing Personal Stress

- Identify sources of stress early.
- Change what you can, accept what you cannot.
- Ways to deal with stress include:
 - Have fun
 - Eat well
 - Get enough sleep
 - Find spiritual outlets
 - Get counseling

Adapted from the Family Caregiver Alliance (2017)

Maintaining Your Health

- Talk with your doctor about your health problems and stress.
- Commit to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- Recognize and treat depression, anger, frustration, and anxiety.
- Accept that grief is not unusual.

Office on Women's Health (2015)

Getting Help

- Admit you need help and then accept it.
- Time off provides rest and improves coping skills.
- Respite care gives you a break.
 - Relax and do something for yourself.
 - Activities should not be related to caregiving.

Adapted from the Family Caregiver Alliance (2017)

Using Respite Care

Respite care comes in many forms:

- Family members or friends
- Paid care from day care, homecare, and residential care (for longer time away)
- Emergency respite from some agencies
- Referrals from Area Agencies on Aging, Alzheimer's Association, and 2-1-1

Paying for Respite Care

- Medicaid covers some forms of respite.
- Medicare covers respite only through the hospice program.
- Respite care is often an out-of-pocket expense but some Departments of Health provide services on a sliding scale.
- You may need to provide insurance coverage and Social Security for workers.

Self-Care Tips

Tips for relieving stress & taking care of yourself:

- Take classes, use community resources
- Ask for and accept help
- Join a support group for caregivers
- Be socially and physically active
- Adopt a healthy lifestyle
- Tell your provider that you are a caregiver

*Office on Women's Health (2015)

Find Local Resources & Services

- Use [2-1-1](#) to find local resources
- Area Agencies on Aging's [Finding Help in Your Community](#) connects you to local services
- Use the Alzheimer's Association [In My Community](#) tool to find support services in your area
- The National Institute on Aging has information on [Alzheimer's](#), and provides resources for family caregivers
- [Family Care Navigator](#) helps you identify resources in your state

Additional Resources & Services

- The [National Respite Locator Service](#) can help you find respite in your local area.
- The [Eldercare Locator](#), a service of the U. S. Administration on Aging, connects caregivers and older adults to local services
- The **National Adult Day Services Association** helps you [Choose a Center](#) by location
- Identify available programs and services specifically for veterans via the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Support for Caregivers](#)

Develop a Plan

- Evaluate your personal needs/preferences
- Develop a care plan that fits current conditions
- Review and renew your care plan periodically
- Use this online tool, [Care to Plan](#), to find support that is right for you

Summary

- Maintain your health; it is the key to providing good care to others.
- Your health and safety is *equally important* to your responsibilities to others.
- Address stress-related health problems.
- Use respite and other services to help you to continue caregiving.