

Help for Caregivers

Who is a caregiver?

A caregiver is any friend or relative who provides unpaid care for someone with a chronic or disabling condition.

What are the benefits and challenges of caregiving?

Caregiving is associated with personal satisfaction in helping a loved one. However, most caregivers feel unprepared to provide care. Caregivers report having less time to spend with other family members and friends. They may have trouble with money because of their caregiving expenses. They also are less likely to make time for regular health care for themselves. Caregivers with high stress levels are at risk of serious medical problems.

What can my doctor do to help?

When taking the person you are caring for to the doctor, it is important to tell the doctor that you are the caregiver. The doctor may ask how you feel about caregiving, how much help your loved one needs, and how you provide this care. The doctor may refer you to other resources for help.

What can I do to help myself?

Make sure to take time for yourself. Find ways to help relieve your stress, such as talking to friends or family, exercising, meditating, or praying. It also may help to find other support services in your area. Make sure to visit your doctor on a regular basis to help protect your own health.

Where can I get more information?

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

Web site about caregiver stress: <http://familydoctor.org/645.xml>

Web site with information for caregivers: <http://familydoctor.org/719.xml>

Caring Today magazine

Web site: <http://www.caringtoday.com>

Family Caregiver Alliance

Web site: <http://www.caregiver.org>

National Alliance for Caregiving

Web site: <http://www.caregiving.org>

Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving

Web site: <http://rci.gsw.edu/>

U.S. Administration on Aging's Eldercare Locator

Web site: <http://www.eldercare.gov>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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