

CAREGIVER STRESS:

How to spot it, why it matters and where to get help



The day-to-day demands of caregiving are often relentless and stressful. If that stress is not managed, the caregiver's mental and physical health can suffer.

Sign and Symptoms of Caregiver Stress



- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling alone, isolated or deserted
- Mood swings: for example, feeling angry one minute and helpless the next
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Gaining or losing a significant amount of weight
- Fatigue
- Losing interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Frequent feelings of worry or sadness
- Frequent headaches or body aches
- Forgetfulness or inability to focus

How Caregiver Stress Affects Health

- Greater likelihood of the caregiver experiencing depression and anxiety
- Weakened immune system, making the caregiver more likely to become sick and reducing the ability to bounce back from illness
- Obesity, which raises risk levels for serious conditions including heart disease, stroke and diabetes
- Greater reliance on unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and drinking alcohol



Managing Caregiver Stress



Take a class.

There's no need to go it alone when so many others have real-world insights to share. Research your local government agencies or other organizations to find classes or workshops designed specifically for caregivers.



Find resources that let you take a break.

Your local municipalities (such as county, city, township, etc.) may have adult daycare or respite services available.



Ask for and accept help.

Make a list of specific ways people can help you. The list might include tasks like grocery shopping, sitting with your loved one while you run an errand, driving to a doctor's appointment, etc. Reach out to friends and family when you need a hand.



Make task lists and stick to a routine.

Routines promote calmness and stability for both you and the person you're caring for.



Take care of your health.

Don't put your own well-being on the back burner. See your doctor for checkups. Make time for exercise, choose healthy foods and get enough sleep.

Caregiver Support Resources

National

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
www.cms.hhs.gov
800-633-4227

Eldercare Locator, Administration on Aging, HHS
www.eldercare.acl.gov

Family Caregiver Alliance
www.caregiver.org

National Alliance for Caregiving
www.caregiving.org

Caregiver Action Network
www.caregiveraction.org

ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center
www.archrespite.org

Statewide

Illinois Department on Aging
<https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/Resources>



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