

A Checklist for New Caregivers



DE LORO

caregiver resource center

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Caring for an older, ill or disabled person can be challenging – especially if you are new to the task. But there are steps you can take to make the job easier.



- ✓ Find out if you can take time off from work under the Family Medical Leave Act.

Research community resources.

- ✓ Talk with hospital staff about services in your area. Contact your county health department about public resources.
- ✓ Call your local Area Agency on Aging, and contact organizations specific to the disease, such as the Alzheimer's Association.
- ✓ Explore options such as adult day care, meal delivery, transportation services, respite services and in-home support services.
- ✓ Consider hiring a care manager. This is a social worker or nurse who specializes in arranging care.
- ✓ Keep the information you collect in a notebook or on the computer. Even if you don't use it now, you may later on.

Learn about the disease, condition or illness.

- ✓ Talk to a health care provider. Ask:
 - Is this a long- or short-term situation?
 - What are the person's specific care needs?
 - How will those needs change over time?
- ✓ Ask about special skills. For example, ask how to move someone with limited mobility or how to give medications.
- ✓ Get more information from books, pamphlets or the Internet.

Plan for immediate care.

- ✓ Ask the person being cared for about his or her wishes around immediate care.
- ✓ Adapt the living environment for special needs, such as a walker, wheelchair or bedside commode.
- ✓ Consider how you will track the person's health and care needs. Keep a log or journal of eating patterns, medications, and physical symptoms.
- ✓ If other family members are providing support, write down who will be in charge of what task.

Explore your options.

- ✓ Write down specific needs, such as meals, bathing, household chores, physical therapy and doctor's appointments.
- ✓ Discuss ways to meet those needs with the person being cared for, relatives, friends and the person's health care provider.



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Enlist the help of others.

- ✓ Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Don't try to do it all.
- ✓ Make a list of people who can help.
- ✓ List the tasks that others can do, such as running errands or bringing dinner.
- ✓ Ask a friend, family member or neighbor to call people or arrange for help.

Organize important information.

- ✓ Write down:
 - Doctors' names, phone numbers and addresses.
 - Medical name of the illness.
 - Medical insurance information.
 - Prescription numbers, names and doses.
- ✓ Organize financial information such as household bills, loans and debts, bank accounts and insurance policies.
- ✓ Photocopy important information such as the social security, driver's license and insurance cards of the person being cared for.

Plan for the future.

- ✓ Get information about the long-term prognosis. Knowing what will happen in the future will help you plan for care.
- ✓ Assess finances. Talk to a financial advisor familiar with care issues.
- ✓ Talk to a lawyer or legal aid representative about a Durable Power of Attorney for health care and finances.

Get support.

- ✓ Talk to a friend, family member or counselor about your feelings.
- ✓ Join a support group.
- ✓ Do you feel overwhelmed? If so, talk to your doctor, therapist or another health professional right away.

Take care of yourself too.

- ✓ Talk to your friends and family members. Enlist their support.
- ✓ Find out if your employer has an Employee Assistance Program that provides support for caregivers.
- ✓ Let go of less important commitments. No one can do it all!
- ✓ Keep doing at least one activity or hobby that brings you pleasure.
- ✓ Take regular breaks from caregiving.
- ✓ Make sure you are meeting your own care needs: eating healthy, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly and spending time with family or friends.



To find information about support groups and services in your area, consult your local phone book or search online. You can also call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116, or visit its website at www.eldercare.gov on the Internet.



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