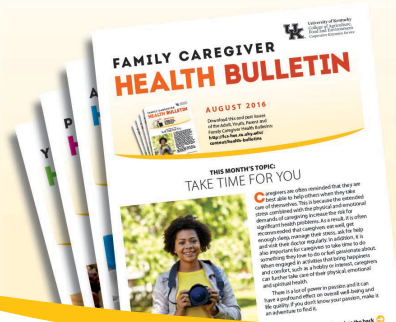




FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



APRIL 2017

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: CAREGIVER TO-DO LIST



Often there is no preparation for caregiving. Yet a crisis occurs, and we find ourselves in a role we know little about. Caregiving can be a positive experience in which one is happy to help provide the necessary care for a family member or friend. It can also be overwhelming and full of pressure and stress. As a result, it is important for caregivers to:

- **Get educated.** There is a lot to learn about people's conditions which has caused them to need care. Take advantage of available resources and health care professionals to ask questions, and learn more about your loved one's condition and prognosis.
- **Take part in support groups.** Support groups are another way in which you can learn from people going through something similar to your own situation.

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Provide encouragement. Try to encourage independence and participation as much as someone's ability will allow.

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- **Assess your loved one's needs and your ability to meet them.** Healthcare professionals can help you determine what sort of help you will need. Caregivers often provide personal care such as baths, toileting and dressing. They help coordinate medical and therapy appointments, manage medicines and finances. They also contribute to their loved one's well-being, happiness and life quality. Remember, you cannot do it all and when there are things you cannot do, ask for help.
- **Consider safety — for your loved one and yourself.** You may need to modify your house by something as minor as removing throw rugs or adding grab bars, to more major renovations such as adding a ramp or moving a room from upstairs to downstairs. Learn how to help safely transfer or assist your loved one from wheelchairs, toilets, beds, chairs and cars so that nobody gets hurt.
- **Look for signs of depression.** You or your loved one may struggle with the changes. Signs of depression include feeling sad, teary, empty, anxious and hopeless. Depression can also result in a loss of interest and pleasure in activities, hobbies and sex. Trouble sleeping, lack of energy, change of appetite are other symptoms. Depression can also manifest itself through slowed thinking, concentration and poor decision making. Talk to your healthcare provider about other signs and symptoms of depression.
- **Provide encouragement.** Try to encourage independence and participation as much as someone's ability will allow. Help your loved one attain or maintain a sense of purpose. Laugh together.
- **Take care of yourself.** To be the best possible caregiver that you can be, YOU must be healthy. You must eat healthy, exercise, sleep and manage your stress. You need to know that you cannot do it all and that it is okay to ask for help.



Being a caregiver, while positive, is also emotionally and physically draining at times. But if you take care of yourself and properly assess the situation and ask and accept the necessary help, caregiving can be a positive ride.

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Written by: Amy Hosier, Ph.D.
Edited by: Connee Wheeler
Designed by: Rusty Manseau
Stock images: 123RF.com

