



Tips,
Tools and
Resources for
Individuals

Care for a Caregiver

You can help a caregiver in any number of ways – from providing a bit of respite to finding resources that will assist them. Connect and help in ways you think meaningful and life enhancing.

INCLUDED IN THIS TOOLKIT:

- 1** Overview
- 2** The Basic Steps
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OVERVIEW

This kit helps you learn how to support a caregiver in meaningful and life enhancing ways. It also links you to resources on public benefits, accessible transportation, home safety, healthy behaviors and medication management.

The Problem

More than three in 10 American households report that at least one person has served as an unpaid family caregiver within the past year – that’s 65.7 million people, according to a recent, comprehensive study, Caregiving in the U.S. 2009 (www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving/info-12-2009/caregiving_09.html). Most provide unpaid care for other adults age 50+.

“The solution for the caregiver might seem obvious: Speak up and get help. However, asking for support is often the hardest step for caregivers to take.”

The task of caregiving is enormous. Caregivers often put themselves at the bottom of the list of people who need care. In doing so, they put their own health at risk and often end up isolating themselves from their social networks.

The Solution

You can help a caregiver in many ways – for example, giving their loved one rides to the doctor’s office, organizing medicine, preparing meals or finding resources that can help families. It’s always good to remind caregivers that if they let others help them, they may avoid burn-out. When you support a caregiver, you’re helping both the caregiver and the loved one they care for.

Time Commitment

You choose. It could be a one-time offer of help with an errand or a special project. Or you might find that you want to devote time each week to helping a caregiver. The ideas in this guide require varying levels of commitment.

Special Considerations

Please ensure that you do not have a cold or other contagious conditions when visiting a care recipient.

Who can do this?

Everyone

Great Reasons to do this Project

- Help caregivers balance their caregiving responsibilities with other demands in their lives
- Give the caregiver a break – a time to relax, refresh and reduce stress
- Offer extra help to the person being cared for



THE BASIC STEPS

STEP 1: YOUR TIME, YOUR TALENT

Determine how much time you may have to devote and in what ways you can contribute most by using your talents and skills. Lighten the load of the caregiver with your unique abilities.

STEP 2: DETERMINE YOUR AREA OF INTEREST

There are many areas in which you can help. Caregivers often need help with basic daily tasks, such as chores around the house, grocery shopping or getting their loved ones to medical appointments. Besides assisting with these tasks, you might consider helping a caregiver in a variety of other areas. Check out the Tip Sheets in this guide for ideas on how to help a caregiver:

- Navigate public benefits: Help someone find and understand federal, state and private programs that help cover the costs of food, medicine and utilities for the caregiver or the care recipient.
- Find transportation
- Perform home safety updates
- Adopt healthy behaviors
- Manage health and medication records

STEP 3: SHARE THIS INFORMATION WITH THE CAREGIVER

No matter how you choose to help, the information in this kit could be of interest to your friend who is a caregiver. Share the Tip Sheets and offer to review them together.

“Simply distributing the Tip Sheets in the guide is a great way to help others.”

STEP 4: AGREE TO A FIRST STEP

Offer to help in some small way and then check in to see if more help is of interest. If you begin to help more often, try to plan a regular schedule. Keeping designated times improves quality of life for the caregiver and the person receiving care. If the caregiver knows you're dependable, he or she can plan



outings, doctor visits, rest and renewal times and even fun activities.

STEP 5: INSPIRE OTHERS ON CREATETHEGOOD.ORG!

KEEP UP THE GOOD!

Visit www.CreateTheGood.org for a range of opportunities to use your lifetime experience, skills and passions to benefit your community.



TIP SHEET: NAVIGATING PUBLIC BENEFITS

The Challenge

Many caregivers are not aware that their loved ones could receive support from government programs to cover the cost of necessities. Complicating the problem are challenging application processes. Each program's application and eligibility requirements can be different.

Help a Caregiver

Help a caregiver access AARP Benefits QuickLINK, an online benefits inventory sponsored by the AARP Foundation. You can use this FREE online tool to determine eligibility for public assistance programs. These programs can help cover expenses such as groceries, utilities, health care and prescriptions. In 15 minutes or less, with Benefits QuickLINK, you can help a caregiver find out whether his or her loved one might be eligible for programs, get applications for the programs, and find out where to apply. All this can be done without ever entering a bank account or Social Security number – and any information that is entered is strictly confidential.

“Someone who has a monthly income of around \$1,700 a month or less and/or who struggles to make ends meet has a good chance at being eligible for benefits.”

Get Started

Log on to a computer and go to www.aarp.org/quicklink or download our easy Help Someone Access Public Benefits Programs at <http://createthegood.org/toolkit/help-someone-access-public-benefit-programs>.

Online Resources and Tools

In addition to Benefits QuickLINK, you can find expert advice, free education and helpful information on Medicare, financial relief, food assistance, choosing an appropriate prescription drug plan and more by using the free tools listed below:

Medicare - www.medicare.gov

Medicare Interactive Tool - www.medicareinteractive.org/index.php

Medicare Part D Guide - www.aarp.org/health/medicare-insurance/medicare_partD_guide/

Doughnut Hole Calculator - doughnuthole.aarp.org

Food Assistance-Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) - www.aarp.org/snap.

Finding Relief in Tough Times - www.aarp.org/realrelief



TIP SHEET: FINDING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

The Challenge

Caregivers often report that they are interested in receiving help with transportation services for their loved one who can no longer drive. Alternative transportation options become crucial to a care recipient’s independence and ability to stay connected to their community and the people and services that support their quality of life. Caregivers may not know how to find these alternative transportation services in their neighborhoods – and they may feel stressed driving their loved ones around town.

The best public transportation services in your community are clean, safe, reliable and user-friendly – as well as accessible and affordable. The Eldercare Locator (www.eldercare.gov/ELDERCARE.NET/Public/Resources/Topic/Transportation.aspx) or your local transit agency may provide helpful information.

Help a Caregiver

Volunteers can help caregivers by exploring transportation options in the care recipient’s neighborhood. As a helper, you can give a ride to a caregiver and/or the one they care for – or you can find a volunteer driving program in your community.

Investigate available transportation services for older adults who don’t drive in your community. Many programs provide door-to-door and/or door-through-door rides. Some can even arrange for a driver to stay with his or her passengers at a destination until they are ready to return home. Getting the facts on transportation services takes another burden off the caregiver’s shoulders.

Please check your auto insurance policy if you decide to become a volunteer driver.

“
[The Eldercare Locator](http://www.eldercare.gov/ELDERCARE.NET/Public/Resources/Topic/Transportation.aspx)
or your local transit agency may provide helpful information on clean, safe, accessible and affordable public transportation.”

Get Started

Volunteers may explore options including reliable public transportation, taxis, car services and on-demand services like dial-a-ride or volunteer drivers. For care recipients to retain their independence, it is essential that they have access to reliable transportation.

Online Resources

Find information on safe, affordable and accessible transportation choices.

Your Local Transit Agency - www.apta.com/resources/links

Easter Seals Senior Transportation Toolkit - www.seniortransportation.easterseals.com

The American Public Transportation Association - www.publictransportation.org/systems

AARP Driver Safety Program - www.aarp.org/drive



Safe Community Walkability Toolkit: Sidewalks and Streets -

<http://createthegood.org/toolkit/sidewalks-and-streets-survey-1>

Linking Transportation and Housing Solutions for Older Adults -

<assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/ppi/liv-com/fs170-transportation-housing.pdf>

AARP Free Mobility Publications -

www.aarp.org/home-garden/livable-communities/info-05-2010/hoorderform.html



TIP SHEET: HOME SAFETY

The Challenge

By 2020 the Census Bureau estimates seven to eight million people in the U.S. will be over the age of 85 – and many of these older adults will live in homes that no longer match their needs and abilities. Most people would like to stay in their home as long as possible, and caregivers often face the challenge of making sure their loved one’s home is safe and comfortable.

Help a Caregiver

Learn easy steps you can take to ensure the home can support the changing needs and lifestyle of their loved one as long as possible. You can help reduce the risk of accidents in the house and provide more peace of mind for the caregiver.

Get Started

Home design can make a big difference in whether your loved ones can continue to stay in their home comfortably and safely. Discover how small, simple updates to a home may make it easier for the caregiver to help their loved ones go about their daily activities while staying comfortable, independent and injury-free in their home.

Volunteers can help to assess these simple safety questions:

- Do doorknobs, cabinet handles and faucets have lever handles, which are easier to use than rounded knobs?
- Does the bathtub and/or shower have a nonslip surface?
- Are hallways and staircases well lit?
- Are there secure handrails on both sides of stairways?
- Can you replace traditional light switches with lower-placed rocker-style light switches and thermostat controls?

“ Help reduce falls by installing a seat in the shower, putting handrails on both sides of the stairway and using brighter, non-glare lights. ”

These are just a few no-cost/low-cost things to help make a home more comfortable and safe to live in. More can be found in Home Safety Tips & Tools (<http://createthegood.org/toolkit/home-safety-tips-and-tools>).

Help to assess the home to identify potential issues early. That way you can explore options for fixing problems and see what kind of budget may be needed to make any major changes. A great volunteer activity is to go room by room with the caregiver using Home Safety Tips & Tools to identify potential safety issues. Then you may want to contact a Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (www.nahb.org/directory.aspx?sectionID=1391&directoryID=188 #) who can identify, recommend and/or provide home modifications.

Online Resources



Home Safety Toolkit - <http://createthegood.org/toolkit/home-safety-tips-and-tools>

Home Safety and Fall Prevention Guides -
www.aarp.org/home-garden/livable-communities/info-05-2010/hoorderform.html

Universal Design Principles -
www.aarp.org/home-garden/home-improvement/info-09-2009/what_is_universal_design.html

Certified Aging-in-Place Specialists -
www.aarp.org/home-garden/home-improvement/info-03-2004/caps.html



TIP SHEET: ADOPTING HEALTHY BEHAVIORS

The Challenge

Caregiving can be rewarding, but it is also demanding. In a study by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP, researchers found that more than half the people who provide extensive care for their parents experience stress and strain.

One in five caregivers says the greatest challenge is that their responsibility for the loved one diminishes their personal time and impacts their lifestyle. By helping a caregiver take care of him or herself, you're helping both caregivers and the people they care for.

Help a Caregiver

Stress can negatively affect overall health, well-being and the ability to provide care. Help a caregiver by sharing some of the immediate benefits of adopting an active, healthy lifestyle, such as:

- Increased energy
- Lower blood pressure
- Better sleep
- Reduced tension and stress
- Reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers
- Elevated mood (a clinically proven benefit of exercise)

“Stress the importance of taking care of your own needs. You can offer the best support when your physical, mental and emotional self is in prime shape.”

Get Started

When you help caregivers find respite, they can have time to use some of the tips below to nurture themselves. Share this list with the caregiver you're supporting:

- **Be social.** This may take advance planning, but it's worth it. Isolation increases stress, while having good times with friends and family helps to balance your emotions.
- **Ask friends and relatives for help.** Make a list of tasks you need to get accomplished and ask friends and relatives to help complete and cross off the tasks. Loved ones who live far away can still provide plenty of support.
- **Reach out to community services.** This is where friendly volunteers jump in! Home-health aides, shopping helpers, homemakers and repair people all can shoulder some of the many aspects of caregiving. Consider tapping into volunteer networks or staff from faith-based or civic groups to visit, cook or help you with driving.
- **Take a break.** You deserve it. Think about respite care by friends, relatives or volunteers. Try for a weekend or a longer vacation by using home-health agencies, nursing homes, assisted living



residences and care homes, which sometimes accept short-term residents when space permits. Adult day-care centers, which usually operate five days a week, provide care in a group setting to older people who need supervision.

- **Let it out.** Talk with friends, family and perhaps leaders at your place of worship about the challenges and rewards of caregiving. Open up to coworkers in similar situations. Or join a support group for caregivers.
- **Redirect your mind** . Do something you enjoy, whether it's reading, walking or listening to music. Some people meditate or use relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or visualizing a positive place. Many find prayer helpful.
- **Organize.** A good plan will give you more personal time. Set priorities and realistic goals. List your caregiving priorities and get the important ones done first. Remember to pace yourself.
- **Ditch negative feelings.** Keep your focus on the positive. Hold a family meeting to resolve conflicts with siblings and other relatives. Feel positive about your accomplishments as a caregiver instead of dwelling on perceived shortcomings.

Online Resources

Get Help Caring for Your Loved One and Yourself - www.aarp.org/caregivers

Fitness Resources - www.aarp.org/health/fitness

Caregiver Stress Quiz -

assets.aarp.org/external_sites/caregiving/homeCare/managing_the_stress_quiz.html

“Prepare to Care” - www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving/info-04-2010/prepare-to-care.html

Alzheimer's Association - www.alz.org or 1-800-272-3900

Family Caregiver Alliance - www.caregiver.org or 1-800-445-8106

National Alliance for Hispanic Health - www.hispanichealth.org

Su Familia: The Hispanic Family Health Helpline, toll-free at 1-866-783-2645

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers - www.caremanager.org or 1-520-881-8008

National Women's Health Information Center - www.womenshealth.gov or 1-800-994-9662

NIHSeniorHealth - www.nihseniorhealth.gov or 1-800-222-2225



TIP SHEET: MANAGING HEALTH AND MEDICATION RECORDS

The Challenge

People have lots to juggle – and to remember – when it comes to their health. Having incomplete or inaccurate health records may interfere with good care, as the records should contain the facts that doctors need to know to treat patients properly.

Health records need to include up-to-date descriptions of medications. Most adults age 45 and older take an average of four prescription drugs daily. And that’s in addition to any vitamins, supplements or over-the-counter medicines. There are many challenges related to managing medications, including no care coordination among doctors, other health professionals and caregivers, which often cause unintended medication interactions, side effects, etc.

Help a Caregiver

At any age, it’s easy to forget important information about health – when the last physical or health screening occurred, and what medications are currently being prescribed.

By helping a caregiver write down a loved one’s entire health and medication record in one place, you can help the caregiver take better care of their loved one, and you may discover clues about problems the person cared for could encounter. If the caregiver and care recipient are comfortable sharing this information with you, you can write it down for them. If not, share the tools below so organizing information will be easier for them.

Start by recording general information such as age, emergency contacts, health insurance, doctor’s names, allergies and special conditions such as having a pacemaker or epilepsy. Add a list of health care providers not forgetting dentist, pharmacists, social workers and more. Then list any conditions, such as high blood pressure and diabetes. Begin to record hospitalizations, office visits, screenings and tests. Check the Tools section for some easy-to-use resources to get you started.

Get information about blood relatives, record the ages of family members and what conditions they have. If they’re deceased, record the cause of death.

Include the names of all medicines, including prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs and any dietary supplements the loved one takes. The medication section of the health record should describe how the loved one takes his or her medicine, how much and when. Explain why the drugs are taken, their form (pill, liquid, caplet or the like), the dosage, and the start and stop dates. In addition, help the caregiver by exploring whether or not the loved one’s medications are well managed. For example, if you help the caregiver with transporting loved ones to doctor’s visits, don’t hesitate to ask questions about why the person takes a particular medicine:

“Prepare several copies of the health and medication record to give to the loved one’s doctors and family.”

- What is the drug supposed to do?



- Are there side effects?
- Are there alternatives?
- Does the medication work safely with the other ones the patient is taking?
- Are there similarly effective, lower-cost brand-name or generic drugs?

Tools to Help You Get Started

Medicare Guide to Starting a Personal Health Record: Medicare has information to help you get started on creating a personal health record. You can find this information at www.medicare.gov.

Age-related Health Records: Other personal health record tools for children and adults are available through the American Health Information Management at <http://www.myphr.com/resources/choose.aspx>.

Family Health Portrait: The U.S. Surgeon General's Office has an Internet-based tool called "My Family Health Portrait" (<https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/fhh-web/home.action>). Enter the family's health history, print out a family tree for the doctor, and – if you choose – share the information with other family members. When you help to create this personal health record, fill in the sections a little at a time. Over time, the record will take shape and the loved one and his or her health care providers will be equipped to do a better job because of your efforts.

“While we cannot change our family history, knowing it can give doctors the information they need to request early or more frequent screenings.”

Personal Medication Record: Track your medications and help your doctor and pharmacist have the most updated information by creating a Personal Medication Record. This form, available in both English and Spanish, allows you to list all the medicines you take, including over-the-counter drugs and herbal supplements, the doses and how you take them. www.aarp.org/health/drugs-supplements/info-2007/my_personal_medication_record.html. Or find a how-to kit on helping others with the Rx Snapshot medication record at <http://createthegood.org/toolkit/rx-snapshot-help-people-manage-their-medications-0>.

Online Resources

Article: Get Healthy, It's Never Too Late - www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving/info-10-2009/women_health_aging.html

Drug-Interaction Checker - healthtools.aarp.org/drug-interactions

Pill Identifier - healthtools.aarp.org/pill-finder

Drug Compare (see how any two drugs stack up on dosage, side effects, interactions and more) - healthtools.aarp.org/drug-directory



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

AARP Caregiving Resources - www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving

Information on caring for your loved one or volunteering to help a friend. Plus for caregivers, an extensive toolkit filled with interactive features, such as expert videos, calculators and worksheets.

CaringBridge - www.caringbridge.org/

This free, customizable site connects family and friends during a loved one's serious health event. It's a good tool for keeping friends and family informed about a person's condition. Visitors to the site can leave messages of love and support on it. Users can also sign up to receive messages when the loved one's journal is updated with new information. You can also have your customized website turned into a CaringBook, a professionally printed book.

Lotsa Helping Hands - www.lotsahelpinghands.com/

You can use this website to create a free, private, web-based community to organize family, friends, neighbors and colleagues – a family's "circles of community" during times of need. Use the site to easily coordinate activities and to invite and manage volunteers. Communicate and share information using announcements, message boards and photos.

ShareTheCare - www.sharethecare.org/

Read this guide to learn how to organize a group to care for someone who is seriously ill. The guide explains what a caregiver is, who needs one, how to start a group and make it run, how to be part of a group and share caregiving tasks and more.

Alzheimer's Association Carefinder - www.alz.org/carefinder/index.asp

Get information and resources on planning ahead, care options and coordinating care.

Eldercare Locator - <http://www.eldercare.gov/Eldercare.NET/Public/Index.aspx>

Locate services and resources for older adults in any U.S. community. This site links older adults and their caregivers with state, local and community agencies on aging. The toll-free number is 1-800-677-1116.

Home Health Care Compare - www.medicare.gov/hhcompare/

Use this tool to investigate how well the home health agencies in your area care for their patients.

Meals on Wheels Association of America - www.mowaa.org/

Find a center (www.mowaa.org/Page.aspx?pid=253) near you to provide home-delivered, nutritious meals to your loved one. Or call 1-703-548-5558.

National Adult Day Services Association, Inc. - www.nadsa.org/



Get the facts on adult day services and find a location in your area. The toll-free number is 1-800-558-5301.

National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers - www.caremanager.org/

Find a local care manager and learn more about geriatric care.

National Association of Social Workers - www.helpstartshere.org/

Find resources and tip sheets for caregivers and a directory of social workers who specialize in working with older people and their caregivers.

National Respite Locator Service - chtop.org/ARCH/National-Respite-Locator.html

Search for local respite services, including programs that specialize in conditions, such as Alzheimer's, epilepsy and autism. You may also call 1-919-490-5577.

National Alliance for Caregiving - www.caregiving.org/

Get information on caregiving research, policy analysis and national programs.