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Caregiver Duties – How Can You Make Your Life Easier?

[Vin](#) January 13, 2017 [Senior Safety](#) [No Comments](#)

The list of caregiver duties can become endless for many who provide care for a loved one or senior in need. Being a caregiver is a daily responsibility with very little downtime or relief. One of the most important things a caregiver can do is develop an organized plan to aid them in their responsibilities and look for ways to make their lives easier.

More importantly, a caregiver needs to make sure they're caring for themselves. Providing care for someone else is nearly impossible if it is coming from a caregiver who is suffering from feelings of stress or burnout.



WHAT IS A CAREGIVER?

Caregivers [provide assistance](#) to someone who is in need. Many seniors need a caregiver in their older ages to assist them with duties such as administering medication, keeping the house clean, cooking, paying bills, and much more. Being a caregiver is extremely difficult because they have very little free time.

In the video below, you'll learn more about exactly what a caregiver is and what their jobs entail on a daily basis.

[The Role of the Caregiver](#)

BY THE NUMBERS

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, [approximately 70%](#) of those who reach the age of 65 should expect to need some form of long-term care. There are various reasons why seniors eventually require a caregiver in their lives.

Chronic illness or accidents are two examples of disability causes that will require long-term care. On average, 8% of those between 40 and 50 years of age fall into this category. The disability number grows exponentially with age with that figure ballooning to nearly 70% of those age 90 or over.

Other examples of seniors who are likely to need a caregiver are those with high blood pressure or diabetes as well as those who exhibit poor diet and exercise habits.

DEVELOPING A CARE PLAN

The responsibilities of a caregiver are a continual process. There aren't likely to be many days that are not busy or stressful once it becomes a full-time responsibility, so the best course of action is to develop a care plan. A care plan will enable you, as a caregiver, to provide the best care that you can as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The [first step](#) in developing a care plan is to determine which responsibilities can be taken on by you, and which need to be handled by family members, helpers, professionals, etc. It's unrealistic for any caregiver to handle everything and maintain any semblance of healthy living for themselves.

Creating a chart is one of the best ways to organize the needs of the senior for whom you are providing care. A chart will help determine whether you can provide those services yourself or whether they can be handled externally.

For example, if the senior you are caring for cannot drive themselves and cannot use public transportation, you may look into transportation services offered for those who have disabilities. If healthcare costs for your loved one are too overwhelming, you may opt to seek assistance such as [Medicare](#) or [Medicaid](#) to reduce some of the burdens.

ASSISTING WITH PERSONAL CARE NEEDS

As a caregiver, you'll find in many cases that the senior you are caring for has a difficult time maintaining personal hygiene. Activities such as bathing or shaving may be difficult for them to do on their own. Skin care is often overlooked and should be addressed. Some [skin care tips](#) for caregivers to use include:

- Keep skin clean and dry. Some elderly patients will have difficulty controlling their bladders or bowels and will need extra attention in this regard
- Bedding should be kept clean, dry, and wrinkle-free. Disposable mattress pads may be a consideration as they can save time in constantly changing sheets or bedding
- Gently massage the skin every few hours to encourage circulation
- Mattresses and chairs should be soft and form fitting rather than rigid
- Pay attention to developing redness or skin breaks and notify a physician as soon as possible

MEDICATION ASSISTANCE

On the surface, being the one to administer medication for a senior in need of care on a daily basis seems simple enough. But for many caregivers, it can be a tumultuous process when the person they're caring for requires numerous medications.

There are [hassles](#) often involved in helping with medications that may not be evident from the outside. Many medications need to be administered via injection. Some seniors need eye drops on a daily basis; others need inhalers. The senior being cared for may not always be agreeable in these situations and may offer up resistance.

DAY TO DAY TASKS

Many caregiver duties include common daily activities. Some of these activities may include things like preparing meals, transportation, housekeeping, shopping, and more.

TRANSPORTATION

For most elders, there comes a time where driving independently is no longer an option because it has become too dangerous. When this time comes, it is going to be up to their caregiver to either account for transportation themselves or find alternate options.

As a caregiver, your [starting point](#) will be determining the physical and cognitive capabilities of the senior who is under your care. Some seniors will still be capable of utilizing public transportation options after they are no longer able to drive themselves. For seniors who are also unable to use public transportation, alternate options such as Paratransit services.

CLEANING AND HOUSEKEEPING

Seniors who are in need of a caregiver aren't likely to have the capacity to maintain their homes as necessary. Many times, it will be up to the caregiver to take on cleaning and housekeeping duties.

In some cases, the caregiver will already have too much on their plate and may want to seek assistance with housekeeping duties. [High schools and colleges](#) often keep lists of students willing to perform these chores for a small fee which could be an excellent option for a caregiver seeking relief.

MEAL PREPARATION

The elderly often find that they struggle to prepare their meals on a daily basis and may need assistance, so meal prep tends to make its way into the category of caregiver responsibilities. [Meal preparation](#) can require a lot of energy and become tiring after a while. If you are feeling burned out as a caregiver and don't feel like you can sustain the responsibility of preparing meals, it may be wise to look into alternative options.

PROVIDING EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

What sometimes gets lost in the sea of caregiver duties and responsibilities is that the senior they care for could probably use some emotional support. One of the [most important](#) things a

caregiver can do is just be there and be available. Listen to the person to whom you're providing care. Talk to them and provide a shoulder to lean on. The appreciation may not always be visible, but it's there.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

When discussing caregiver duties and making arrangements, caregivers often leave out the most important part of the equation: Caring for themselves. Filling caregiver duties is impossible if the caregiver is too tired, burned out, or stressed to provide the services required of them adequately.

[Research has shown](#) that caregivers tending to seniors suffering from dementia have particularly high levels of stress hormones that could be potentially harmful. Regardless of the ailment or disability, being a caregiver requires an incredible amount of patience and stamina and can take a serious toll over time.

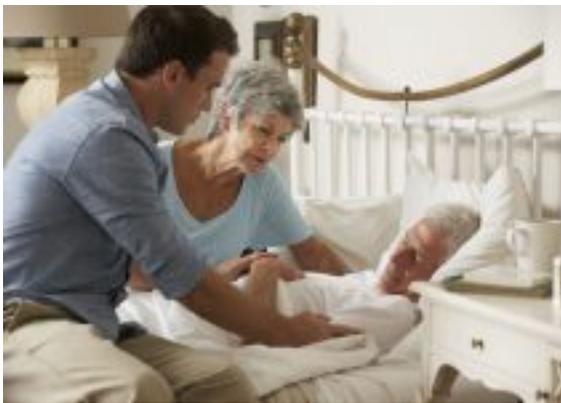
[Caregiver burnout](#) is real and is an issue that most caregivers may not even notice at first because they're so busy and overwhelmed. A few signs and symptoms of burnout may include:

- Onset of depression
- Constantly feeling tired
- Losing interest in work and other activities
- Withdrawing from social activities and social contacts
- Increased use of alcohol or stimulants
- Abnormal eating patterns
- Feelings of helplessness

[Caregiver support groups](#) exist to alleviate some of the stresses of caregiving and offer up a reprieve for those who spend the majority of their free time doing so. Other ways to combat caregiver burnout include getting regular exercise, taking time to do things you enjoy, and re-shuffling your responsibilities to potentially lighten the load and make things easier.

Being a caregiver is an unenviable job and is rarely rewarding. The duties of a caregiver seldom see the appreciation they truly deserve. Providing care can be exhausting and can present numerous hurdles along the way. It is important to find the most efficient and least demanding ways to provide care and put a plan into action in order to avoid burnout.

Do you have experience as a caregiver and have tips or a story to offer up? Comment below and let us know!



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