

Becoming the Caregiver for a Loved One



Providing care for an elderly, disabled, or sick loved one can be difficult.

If the responsibility of being a caregiver is new to you, the following suggestions may help.

1. Find a [support system](#) in your community, including neighbors, friends, and doctors. Contact them to let them know what is happening, and ensure that they know how to reach you. Ask and accept help. One person should not carry out all the responsibilities of caring for another alone.
2. In case you are not able to provide care, considering [backup plans and arrangements](#) ahead of time can help to avoid crisis and hardship later. Ask other relatives or friends if they would be willing to provide care in case you get sick or need a break.
3. Ask employees at a library or senior citizen center for [lists or directories of resources](#) that may be of special use to you. Have multiple copies on hand for yourself and anyone else taking part in the care of the loved one. This makes everyone aware of the resources available near you, and it allows for learning about and becoming connected to the network.
4. Prepare a [list of prescription and over-the-counter medications](#), including doses and schedules. Be sure to update it as often as necessary, as this information is vital in a medical emergency. It will also be helpful, if you cannot always be there to provide the care yourself.
5. Check the house for [potential hazards](#)-such as loose rugs that may contribute to falls, poor lighting, and unsafe clutter-and safety concerns, like grab bars needed in the bathroom. Avoiding accidents is important because injuries can be especially damaging to senior citizens and disabled or sick people.
6. Figure out if the person being cared for has an [advance directive that states his or her preferences for health care treatment](#). If so, get a copy for yourself, other relatives involved in coordinating the care, and the doctor. If not, encourage and help the person to make one.