

Alzheimer's Disease – Caring for the Caregiver

Caring for someone with Alzheimer's can be overwhelming. As a caregiver, it is common to experience anger, guilt, discouragement, worry, sadness, and even social isolation. You may also find yourself with so many responsibilities that you neglect taking good care of yourself. But the best thing you can do for the person you are caring for is stay physically and emotionally strong. The following are some tips for taking care of yourself as you care for your loved one.



See the doctor – Be sure to visit your physician regularly (at least annually) and listen to what your body is telling you. Any exhaustion, stress, sleeplessness, or changes in appetite or behavior should be taken seriously. Ignoring these symptoms can cause your physical and mental health to decline.

Stay active – Physical activity in any form can help reduce stress and improve overall well-being. Even 10 minutes of exercise a day can help. Take a walk or do an activity you love, such as gardening or dancing.

Eat well – Heart-healthy eating patterns, such as the Mediterranean and MIND diets, are good for overall health and may help protect the brain. Limit added sugar, red meat, and other animal-based foods that are high in saturated fat while emphasizing whole grains, fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts, olive oil, and other healthy fats.

Know what community resources are available – Adult day in-home assistance, visiting nurses, and meal delivery are just some of the services that can help you manage daily tasks.

Seek support – Call on friends and family for help when needed. Consider joining a local support group for caregivers and individuals living with dementia.

Manage your stress – There are several simple relaxation techniques that can help relieve stress, including visualization, meditation, breathing exercises, and progressive muscle relaxation. If stress become overwhelming, seek professional help.

Stay active – Physical activity in any form can help reduce stress and improve overall well-being. Even 10 minutes of exercise a day can help. Take a walk or do an activity you love, such as gardening or dancing.

Make time for yourself – It's normal to need a break from caregiving duties. Consider taking advantage of respite care so you can spend time doing something you enjoy. Respite care provides caregivers with a temporary rest from caregiving, while the person with Alzheimer's disease continues to receive care in a safe environment.

Educate yourself on Alzheimer's disease – People with Alzheimer's disease change over time and so do their needs. They may require care beyond what you can provide on your own. Learning about community resources and care options can make the transition easier.

The Caterpillar **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** is a free, voluntary, and completely confidential service provided to employees and their eligible family members to help meet many challenges at home and work. It can assist with a variety of personal and health concerns, including stress management and providing referrals for eldercare resources. More information and global contact numbers can be found online at EAP.cat.com.

Source: Alzheimer's Association (alz.org)