

Being a Caregiver

Caring for someone with dementia is stressful. You might have different feelings as you take care of your loved one. These feelings are normal and might include:

- **Worry:** You may find it hard to not worry about the future and how you will cope with being a caregiver.
- **Anger:** You may feel angry that your loved one has dementia and that there is no cure. You may feel frustrated at other family members for not helping more.
- **Loneliness:** It may seem like few people understand your problems.
- **Tiredness:** You may feel like you are not getting enough sleep. You may feel too tired to do all the things you want to do in a day.
- **Sadness:** You may feel sad that your loved one has changed.
- **Guilt:** You may feel that you are not doing enough to help your loved one.

These feelings can make it hard for you to take care of your loved one and care for yourself. If you have any of these feelings, talk to your doctor. You are not alone.

Tools to Reduce Stress

Learn about dementia. Read books, attend workshops or support groups. Look at online resources (PBS series) and talk to a doctor.

Allow yourself to feel sad. This is a major life change for you, your loved one, and your family.

Review or complete financial, legal and long-term plans. It helps to make these plans when your loved one can still help with the decisions.

Find things to do that you and your loved one enjoy.

Focus on the remaining strengths of your loved one, rather than what your loved one can no longer do.

Plan time off every week. Use the time to do something you enjoy.

Accepting Help

Few caregivers can handle it alone. Arrange for help as soon as you can. If you wait until you are very tired, you may find it hard to recover. Take care to prevent burnout.

If you want to provide direct care most of the time, let others help with simple tasks such as cooking, errands, or getting your car fixed.

Talk with other people about your needs and concerns so they can help. Think about going to a support group. Meeting other families who are also caring for a loved one with dementia can be very helpful.

Resources

To find out more about aging and living with disabilities, find your local *Aging and Disability Resource Center* (ADRC). Find locations here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/adrc/index.htm>.

Studies show that support for caregivers increases well-being and helps to prevent illness. <https://www.alzinfo.org/articles/alzheimers-research-on-caregiving/>

The Alzheimer's Association is a great source of information. You can contact them at **1-800-272-3900** or www.alz.org.

Alzheimer's & Dementia Alliance of WI is a great resource. You can contact them at **1-888-308-6251** or www.alzwisc.org

PBS.org/theforgetting (A Portrait of Alzheimer's documentary)

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5266