



Caregiver's Answers, Topics, and Helpful Information

In an endeavor to continually assist caregivers in their search for pertinent information regarding eldercare, our Information and Referral Specialists address topics most frequently asked questions via Caregiver's Answers, Topics, and Helpful Information (CATHI). Additionally, caregivers are invited to e-mail individual questions caregiver2@senior-resources-guilford.org and an Information and Referral Specialist will reply.

Dear CATHI,

Question: I am a new caregiver for my elderly family member. What are some tips I can use to make caregiving a little easier?

Answer: Caring for an older, ill or disabled person can be challenging, especially if you are new to the task. There are steps you can take to make the job easier.

Learn about the disease, condition or illness

Talk to a healthcare provider. Ask:

- Is this a long-term or short-term situation?
- What are the person's specific care needs?
- How will those needs change over time?

Ask about special skills that might be necessary. For example, ask how to move someone with limited mobility or how to give medications. Get more information from books, pamphlets or the internet.

Explore your options

- Write down specific needs such as meals, bathing, household chores, physical therapy and doctors' appointments.
- Discuss ways to meet those needs with the person being cared for, relatives, friends and the person's health care provider.

Research community resources

- Talk with hospital staff about services in your area
- Contact your county health department about public resources
- Call your local Area Agency on Aging and contact organizations specific to the disease such as the Alzheimer's Association.
- Explore options such as adult day care, meal delivery, transportation services, respite services and in-home aide services.

Plan for immediate care

- Ask the care recipient about his or her wishes around immediate care.
- Adapt the living environment for special needs, like a walker, wheelchair, or bedside commode.

- Consider how you will track the person's health and care needs. Keep a log or journal of eating patterns, medications, and physical symptoms.
- If other family members are providing support, write down who will oversee which task.

Enlist the help of others

- Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. Don't try to do it all.
- Make a list of people who can help.
- List the tasks that others can do, such as running errands.
- Ask a friend, family member or neighbor to call people or arrange for help.

Organize important information

- Write down doctors' names, phone numbers and addresses
- Organize financial information such as household bills, loans, debts, bank accounts and insurance policies.

Plan for the future

- Get information about long-term prognosis. Knowing what will happen in the future will help you plan for care.
- Talk to a lawyer or legal aid representative about Durable Power of Attorney for healthcare and finances.

Get support

- Talk to a friend, family member or counselor about your feelings.
- Join a support group

Take care of yourself too

- Talk to your friends and family members. Enlist their support.
- Find out if your employer has an Employee Assistance Program that provides support for caregivers.
- Let go of less important commitments. No one can do it all.
- Keep doing at least one activity or hobby that brings you pleasure.
- Take regular breaks from caregiving.

The information in this article was taken and adapted from the brochure A Checklist for New Caregivers by Mardi Richmond

Note: This is for informational purposes only.
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For referrals to community organizations in Guilford County that assist older adults and caregivers, contact Senior Resources of Guilford's SeniorLine at (336) 333-6981 in Greensboro and Guilford Co., in High Point/Jamestown (336) 884-6981 or the Caregiver Support Specialist, at (336) 373-4816 or (336) 883-3586 in High Point.



North Carolina Family Caregiver Support Program
Completing the Care