

Frequently Asked Questions About Caregiving

I'm new to caregiving. Where do I start?

Caregiving can be overwhelming, especially when you're starting out. Take a deep breath! Then tackle one task at a time.

First, assess your loved one's needs. What types of help are needed? Ask family members and friends to share tasks. Look for resources in your community, such as home health care or adult day care centers. The [Eldercare Locator](#) can help you find in-home help; transportation; resources to install ramps, grab bars, or other home modifications; and other resources in your area. It can also help you learn about options for paying for care.

How do I help organize important paperwork and get affairs in order?

My mother was recently diagnosed with [Alzheimer's](#). Her doctor recommended we make plans now for her future while she is still well enough to tell us what she prefers. My sister and I agree, but how do we start?

It can be helpful to know where your loved one's important papers are stored so you can find them when you need them. [Getting Your Affairs in Order](#) has a list of legal, financial, and personal records you'll want to locate and organize.

Another tip: Get formal permission from your loved one to talk with his or her lawyer, bank, and healthcare providers in advance. Many of these institutions have their own forms that must be signed with your loved one's consent.

Learn more about [advance care planning](#) and [legal and financial planning for people with Alzheimer's](#).

How can I help my older parents from afar?

If you live an hour or more away from a person who needs care, you are a long-distance caregiver. There are a number of jobs you can take on even if you live far

away. You can arrange and coordinate care in the person's home or long-term care facility, help with finances, organize legal and financial paperwork, or help make the home safer. You can also research local resources and learn how to make the most of your limited time when you visit an older relative far away.

You can also hire a [geriatric care manager](#)—a specially trained professional who can help your family identify needs and make a plan to meet those needs.

[Get more tips about long-distance caregiving.](#)

How can I find caregiving resources in my area?

My husband of 40 years fell and broke his hip. Now he is very weak and needs a lot of help around the house. I have congestive heart failure and can't help him as much as he would like. My neighbor has been a great help with meals and groceries, but neither of us can drive. How can I get help with transportation and in-home care?

Whatever kind of help your loved one needs—for example, with personal care, transportation, or meal preparation—it may be available in your community. You can get more information from your local [Area Agency on Aging](#), local and State offices on aging or social services, tribal organization, or nearby senior center.

Here are some places to start looking for help:

- [Eldercare Locator](#), 1-800-677-1116 (toll-free)
- [Family Care Navigator](#), 1-800-445-8106 (toll-free)
- Your State government's website

[Find more caregiving resources at NIA's Caregiving Portal.](#)

How do I choose a long-term care facility?

Sometimes, an older person you care for can no longer live safely in his or her own home. Some may move in with family or friends. People who require lots of help might move to a residential facility, such as an assisted living facility, nursing home, or continuing care retirement community. But how can you find a place that will take good care of the older person you love and meet his or her needs? If possible, it's best to plan ahead for long-term care.

Learn about [different types of long-term care](#). Then, visit facilities and ask questions. Note how comfortable and content the residents seem and how they interact with the staff.

[Learn more about choosing a nursing home.](#)

How can we pay for long-term care?

Many caregivers and older adults worry about the cost of long-term care. These expenses can use up a significant part of monthly income, even for families who thought they had saved enough. How people pay for long-term care depends on their financial situation and the kinds of services they use. Often, they rely on a variety of payment sources, including personal funds, Federal and State government programs, and private financing options. Veterans may also be eligible for assistance through the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#).

[Learn more about paying for long-term care.](#)

Can I get paid to take care of a family member?

Family caregivers make a lot of sacrifices to care for older or sick relatives. Some even quit their jobs to care for a loved one full-time. Your state may offer help to certain caregivers. Programs vary, so contact your local [Area Agency on Aging](#) to find out what programs are available in your neighborhood. [Veterans](#), [Medicaid](#) recipients, and people living with certain diseases may also be eligible for financial assistance through Federal, State, and private organizations.

How do I make an older person's home safer?

My dad is 72 and had a stroke 3 months ago. He's just about ready to be released from rehab and will come home. How do I make my dad's house more accessible for his new condition?

Talk with the person's doctors and social workers about how his or her health might make it harder to get around and take care of themselves at home. Local and State offices on aging and social service agencies may be able to provide or tell you about services to make the home easier and safer to live in. Think about things like ramps at the front and back doors, grab bars in the shower and next to the toilet, and

handles on doors and faucets that are easier to use.

Get [tips on making a home safe and accessible](#).

How can I talk with an older person's doctor?

My great-aunt has no problems getting to her doctor's appointments, but she always seems to forget what the doctor told her to do. How can I help her remember?

Many older adults find it helpful to bring a family member or friend with them to the doctor's office. Just remember to get formal permission from your relative to speak with his or her healthcare providers. Before the appointment, you can help your relative prepare for the visit, write down concerns, and go over what to say to the doctor. During the visit, you can take notes. After the appointment, review what the doctor said to help your loved one remember.

[Read more about how friends and family can help during a doctor's visit](#).

I'm overwhelmed and exhausted. How can I get a break from caregiving?

My uncle is 78 and has [dementia with Lewy bodies](#). My aunt had been taking care of him, but after she died, I've had to step up. But it's been hard to juggle work, my own family, and my uncle's care. I'm overwhelmed and exhausted. I need help.

[Share this infographic](#) and help spread the word about caring for yourself while caring for others

Take Care of Yourself as a Caregiver

Take a short walk outside.

Try a yoga class.

Meet a friend for lunch.

Join a support group.

Make time for a hobby you enjoy.

Go to sleep a half-hour earlier.

Activities like these can lower your stress, boost your mood, and help make you a better caregiver, too.

Learn more about caregiving at www.nia.nih.gov/caregiving.

NIH National Institute on Aging

Taking care of a sick family member is hard work. But taking care of yourself is important too. When you feel overwhelmed and exhausted, you can't be a good caregiver to your loved one. All caregivers need a break from time to time. Take a walk, talk with friends, or get some sleep. Eating healthy foods and staying physically active will help you stay healthy. Joining a caregiver support group—either in your community or online—can help you feel less alone and gives you a chance to exchange stories and ideas. Don't be afraid to ask for help from family members or friends. Respite care services may also be an option.

[Learn more about respite care.](#)

What do I do if I suspect an older person is being mistreated?

Abuse can happen to anyone, no matter the person's age, sex, race, religion, or ethnic background. Abuse can be physical, emotional, financial, or sexual, and it can happen at a facility, at a family member's house, or at home.

[Learn to protect the people you love from elder abuse.](#)

For more information about caregiving, [visit NIA's Caregiving Portal.](#)

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