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# Caregiver Resource Guide

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Tips and tools for Minnesota caregivers



*Helping you be the best caregiver you can be.*

# Introduction to Caregiving

YOU CALL IT

"shoveling the  
neighbor's walk."

## Do you . . .

- Bring your dad a few groceries?
- Drive a friend to her doctor visits?
- Remind mom to take her pills?

Then you are a caregiver.

## Caregiving can be rewarding, but also life changing.

Being a caregiver may take you by surprise. You might start by doing simple tasks. Soon, you are spending a lot of time caring for another. Or, caregiving can come about quickly. However you began caregiving, your life has changed. The change can last a few weeks, or several years.

Caregiving has many rewards, but also shifting roles and emotions. You might feel troubled or frustrated. You may also feel alone or angry because others don't understand. These feelings are natural, and common.

## Your situation is unique. But you are not alone.

Each caregiving experience is unique. You will have changing needs, feelings, trials and rewards. Your experience will also change over time. Yet, one thing is for sure. All caregivers will need to find balance.

With balance in your life, you will be better able to keep providing care.

*This guide can help you be the best caregiver you can be.*



## care·giver

Noun: A family member, friend, or neighbor who takes care of an older adult.

# Getting Started with Caregiving

YOU CALL IT

"helping my sister  
handle paperwork."



## Start today to be ready for the future.

- **Talk about important things now.** While some topics are hard to discuss, your family member or friend might just be waiting for an opening to talk about them.
- **Make a plan.** Use of the AARP's free *Prepare to Care* guide, an "all-in-one" planning kit.
- **Find resources.** Use Minnesota's web-based *Long-term Care Choices Navigator* to help you make choices and find local resources.
- **Ask your family member or friend to complete a *Health Care Directive*** so their health wishes are documented.
- **Consider legal matters.** Laws vary from state to state. It might be helpful to get advice from someone who specializes in elder law.

## Know your finances.

- **Think ahead about how long-term care will be paid for.** Options include personal income and savings, long-term care insurance, home equity options, or long-term care annuities. Most people think that Medicare will cover it all. However, Medicare pays for limited long-term care (e.g., limited time in skilled care setting or home care services).

## Caregiving is not meant to be a one-person job—find support.

- **Form a team.** Think of what needs to be done, and when, and the people who could help. A family friend might cook dinner once a month. Or, a neighbor might get groceries every week.
- **Get back-up.** Find at least two people who will help if you are sick, you work, or you need to be away.
- **Hold a family meeting.** Gather everyone and discuss needs and solutions. Confirm next steps. Then, follow through with decisions made. See the *Minnesota Board on Aging Family Meeting* brochure for information.
- **Communicate.** Keep in touch by using a phone tree, a conference call line, email, social media (Facebook), or a blog.

# Caring for You

YOU CALL IT

"helping dad  
pay his bills."



WE CALL IT

caregiving.

## Care for yourself so you can be the best caregiver you can be.

When you care for others it's easy to forget about your own needs. As a result, your health might suffer. Without you, what would become of your family member or friend?

### Watch for signs of too much stress:

- Do you get sick often?
- Are you sleeping too little or too much?
- Has it been a long time since you've felt like doing anything just for fun?

### Here are some ways to take care of yourself:

- Get routine health checkups, tests, and flu shots.
- Exercise regularly. Eat nutritious meals. Get at least seven hours of sleep a night.
- Talk to your doctor about your caregiving, as well as any health concerns, such as signs of anxiety or depression.
- Take regular breaks from caregiving. Do something you enjoy. The care could be provided by a family member, friend, or in-home respite provider.
- When done daily, meditation, prayer, or relaxation exercises can relieve stress.
- Join *Caregiving NOW*, a network on the web for caregivers. Having a team of friends and experts can help you along the way.
- Contact the Senior LinkAge Line® for services and support. This includes someone to help you plan and find resources, provide care when you are away, do chores, or give rides.
- Find a Caregiver Consultant to help you look at your situation with fresh eyes and develop a plan. Learn about tips for managing stress, balancing work and caregiving, finding respite, or creating a support network. Some consultants specialize in memory care.
- Map out a routine to help you put first things first.
- If you work, learn about company policies that may help you as a caregiver.

See the *MBA Work and Caregiving: Finding Balance* brochure for more information.

# Caring for Older Adults

YOU CALL IT

"helping family understand my wife's memory loss."



WE CALL IT

caregiving.

## Here are tips to help you provide the best care you can.

Each situation is unique. Understand your own limits. If the care needs are more than you can provide consult a physician or health care provider.

- Start with a medical exam to learn about the older adult's diagnosis and treatment options. Write down questions before the visit so you cover everything.
- Prepare a *Personal Health Record* to keep track of important information.
- Consult with the physician if memory loss is becoming an issue. Memory loss can be caused by many things. Contact the *Alzheimer's Association* for more information and resources.
- Identify and manage risks through the *Live Well at Home Rapid Screen*®. Use technology to manage the care, such as emergency response devices, pill dispensers, web cameras, and more.
- Learn about what Medicare and other insurance will pay for by calling the Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433.
- Consult a professional. This includes a long-term care consultant, a geriatric care manager, or a caregiver consultant.
- Find Support. This includes caregiver education programs, support groups, respite care, and adult day services. Faith-based or voluntary organizations may offer help with chores, grocery shopping, or companionship services. Call the Senior LinkAge Line® for help finding these resources.

# Managing Moves Between Care Settings

YOU CALL IT

"reminding my  
husband to  
take his pills."



WE CALL IT

caregiving.

## Tips to ease the move from one care setting to another.

At times an older adult may need care outside of the home. This includes a hospital, emergency room, or nursing home, before returning home. These moves can be stressful for older adults and caregivers.

## Plan ahead to reduce stress and manage the situation.

- Know the person's health history. Use a *Personal Health Record* to retain health history, insurance, legal documents, medications, and more.
- Know your rights. See the *Patient Bill of Rights During Transitions of Care*.
- Know what Medicare and other insurance covers (and what it doesn't). Contact the Senior LinkAge Line® at 1-800-333-2433.

## While in the hospital.

- Ask questions whenever you don't understand something. Talk regularly with the doctor or health care provider about the diagnosis, treatment options, and plan. Tell them how the older adult is feeling.
- Clarify the older adult's hospital status. Ask if your family member or friend has been officially admitted to the hospital, or if he or she is under observation status.
- Connect with the social worker/discharge planner early in the stay to begin to coordinate follow up visits and arrange in-home support. ***All facilities have an obligation to arrange for a safe discharge plan.***

## After the move home.

- Know the "red flags" or warning signs that a condition may be worsening, and what steps to take. Report concerns to a health care professional.
- Review discharge information, including appointments to make and medications.
- Contact the primary care physician. See them within a week of discharge.
- Form a team of family or friends to help with care tasks, errands, meals, and more. Find ways to take breaks from caregiving, if even for short periods of time.

# Minnesota Resources

## Minnesota Board on Aging

The MBA's mission is to ensure that older Minnesotans and their families are effectively served by state and local policies and programs in order to age well and live well. The MBA has seven Area Agencies on Aging dedicated to addressing the needs of older adults and family caregivers.

*[www.mnaging.net](http://www.mnaging.net)*

## Linkage Lines

- Disability Linkage Line® 1-866-333-2466
- Senior LinkAge Line® 1-800-333-2433
- Veterans LinkAge Line™ 1-888-LinkVet

## Long-Term Care Choices Navigator, Minnesota Board on Aging

*[www.longtermcarechoices.minnesotahelp.info](http://www.longtermcarechoices.minnesotahelp.info)*

## MinnesotaHelp.info Caregiver Link

Look here for information to enhance to your caregiving role. You will find resources on planning, arranging care, stress, family issues, learning new care tasks, and more. Caregiver consultants are trained to help you care for an older adult while finding balance. Contact the Senior LinkAge Line® to find a caregiver consultant in your area.

*<http://caregiver.minnesotahelp.info>*

## Minnesota Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care

The Minnesota Office of Ombudsman for Long-Term Care is a consumer advocacy program of the MBA. It address concerns relating to in-home services, assisted living services in Housing with Services settings, nursing home services, and Medicare hospital services.

1-800-657-3591

*[www.mnaging.net/Advocate/OLTC](http://www.mnaging.net/Advocate/OLTC)*

## For a full version of the Caregiver Resource Guide see the MBA Caregiver Page

*[www.mnaging.net/en/Advisor/Caregiver](http://www.mnaging.net/en/Advisor/Caregiver)*

**Additional Resources** continued on back page



# Additional Resources

## **Alzheimer's Association [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)**

Memory Loss/10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

[www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_10\\_signs\\_of\\_alzheimers.asp#signs](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_10_signs_of_alzheimers.asp#signs)

## **Health Care Directive for Minnesota, Minnesota Board on Aging**

[www.mnaging.net/en/Advisor/HealthCareDirective](http://www.mnaging.net/en/Advisor/HealthCareDirective)

## **Minnesota Board on Aging Brochures**

Work and Caregiving: Finding Balance

[www.mnaging.net/Advisor/EmployersCaregivers](http://www.mnaging.net/Advisor/EmployersCaregivers)

## **Holding a Family Meeting: Steps to Address Eldercare Issues**

[www.mnaging.net/en/Advisor/Caregiver](http://www.mnaging.net/en/Advisor/Caregiver)

## **Minnesota Live Well At Home<sup>SM</sup>**

[www.mnlivewellathome.org](http://www.mnlivewellathome.org)

## **Personal Health Record**

[http://www.champ-program.org/static/Personal\\_Health\\_Record\\_for\\_BPPI.pdf](http://www.champ-program.org/static/Personal_Health_Record_for_BPPI.pdf)

## **Prepare to Care: a Caregiving Planning Guide for Families, AARP**

<http://www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/info-07-2012/prepare-to-care-planning-guide.html>

## **Your Rights During Transitions of Care, National Transitions of Care Coalition Website**

[www.ntocc.org/Portals/0/PDF/Resources/PatientBillOfRights.pdf](http://www.ntocc.org/Portals/0/PDF/Resources/PatientBillOfRights.pdf)

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