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Frequently Asked Questions About Caregiving

Providing care for an older adult can be overwhelming, especially at the beginning. On this page, you will find answers to frequently asked questions about caregiving.

Click on each of the expandable sections below to see the answer to each question and links to other resources.



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

If you have never been a caregiver before, it may feel daunting at first. There might be tasks to organize, new medical terms to learn, and schedules to coordinate. Start by thinking about:

- Your loved one's needs
- Family members and friends who can [help you with caregiving tasks](#)
- [Services and community resources](#), such as home health care or adult day care centers
- Options for [paying for care](#)

If you don't live nearby, you can learn about ways to provide support and assistance as a [long-distance caregiver](#).

Find more tips for [getting started with caregiving](#).



[Read and share this infographic](#) about

long-distance caregiving.

How can I find a caregiver support group?



Caregiver support groups (online or in-person) are a great way to connect with people who understand what you're going through.

Your doctor or faith community may be able to help you find the right support group. You can also reach out to your local senior center, state office on aging or social services office, or local [Area Agency on Aging](#) for information about support groups. The [Family Caregiver Alliance](#) and the [Caregiver Action Network](#) offer online and in-person settings for caregivers to connect with one another.

Caring for an older adult can be both rewarding and challenging. Learn about more ways you can [take care of yourself](#) as a caregiver.

How can I find caregiving resources in my area?



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](#), 800-677-1116
- [Family Caregiver Alliance navigator](#), 800-445-8106
- Your state government's website

Learn more about [community resources for older adults living at home](#).

How do I help an older adult plan for the future?



You may need to help your loved one plan for the future by preparing important documents and storing them in a safe place. Learn how to [get their affairs in order](#), which includes locating and organizing legal, financial, and personal records.

Depending on your loved one's medical needs, you may need to help them prepare [advance directives](#), which are legal documents that provide instructions for medical care if a person cannot communicate their own wishes. [Get tips](#) and [worksheets](#) to help you discuss advance care planning with your loved one.

What should I do if an older adult is having memory issues?



Occasional [forgetfulness](#) is a normal part of aging. But more significant [memory problems](#), changes in thinking ability or personality, or poor decision-making could indicate a serious condition that requires medical

attention. If you're concerned about the person's physical or mental health, suggest a visit to a health care provider. You might offer to make the appointment, give them a ride, or [go with them to see the doctor](#).

Learn more about [how memory changes as people age](#).

How do I choose a long-term care facility?



When an older person needs more help than family and friends can provide, it may be time to consider moving to a [residential \(live-in\) facility](#), such as assisted living or a nursing home. Choosing a place to live for [long-term care](#) is a big decision. It can be hard to know where to start.

Before you choose a long-term care facility for your loved one, consider their needs and wants. Talk to friends and family in your area and call and visit different facilities. Ask questions during your visit and ask for information about costs and payment options.

Learn more about [choosing a nursing home or other long-term care facility](#).

How can I pay for long-term care?



Many caregivers and older adults worry about the costs of [long-term care](#). These expenses can use up a significant part of monthly income, even for people 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.

Some people believe that their current health or disability insurance will pay for their long-term care needs, but most of these insurance policies include limited, if any, long-term care benefits. In most cases, people must find other means of paying for long-term care. They may rely on a variety of payment sources, including personal funds, federal and state government programs, and private financing options.

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

How can I help an older adult with day-to-day activities?



An older adult might need help with everyday activities such as household chores, [preparing meals](#), getting dressed, or going to the bathroom. They may also need help [managing their finances](#) and scheduling [doctor appointments](#). Learn about [services available for older adults living at home](#).

While you may be able to help with some personal and household tasks, you might want to hire professionals to assist with others. Some older adults, such as those living with dementia, may experience changes in personality and behavior that make everyday care more challenging.

Get tips for how to [help an older adult with personal care](#) and [manage behavior changes](#).

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



Taking care of a family member is hard work. But [taking care of yourself](#) is important, too. All caregivers need a break from time to time. Don't wait until you're completely overwhelmed to seek help from family, friends, or professional services.

Accepting help from others isn't always easy. You may worry about being a burden, or you may feel uncomfortable admitting that you can't do it all yourself. Get tips for how to [ask family members or friends for help](#).

Respite care may also be an option. Respite care provides short-term relief for primary caregivers, giving them time to rest, travel, or spend time with other family and friends. The care may last anywhere from a few hours to several weeks at a time. Respite care can take place at home, in a health care facility, or at an adult day care center.

Learn more about [respite care](#) and [sharing caregiving responsibilities](#) with others.

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



Family caregivers make a lot of sacrifices to care for older, sick, or disabled relatives. Some even quit their jobs to care for the person full time. There are many costs involved in caregiving; for example, covering travel expenses, paying bills, and buying household essentials. These costs can add up to create a significant financial burden for caregivers.

Many states offer some form of pay for family caregivers. But the laws, eligibility, and funding for this support vary by state. The most common source of assistance is Medicaid, which offers several state-based programs to people who are eligible based on income or disability. These programs include home- and community-based services, adult foster care, and Medicaid personal care services. Contact your [state Medicaid agency](#) to learn more.

Veterans and people living with certain diseases may also be eligible for financial assistance through federal and state agencies or private organizations. Information is available by visiting the [Eldercare Locator](#) or by calling 800-677-1116.

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

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



There are a variety of ways to make an older adult's surroundings safer and easier to manage. Go through the house room by room to identify potential problems and safety issues. First, correct any immediate dangers, such as loose stair railings and poor lighting, and then work on other ways to ensure the person will be as safe as possible at home.

Download this [Home Safety Checklist](#) for room-by-room suggestions to help you identify and remove hazards around the house.

Are you worried that making changes might be expensive? You may be able to get help paying for repairs and safety updates to an older adult's home. Check with your state housing finance agency, social services department, community development groups, or the federal government for financial aid programs and discounts. You can also contact the [Eldercare Locator](#) for help finding resources.

Learn more about [safety and older adults](#).

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



Each year, hundreds of thousands of adults over the age of 60 are abused, neglected, or financially exploited. This mistreatment is called elder abuse. Abuse can happen anywhere, including in the older person's home, a family member's home, an assisted living facility, or a nursing home. The mistreatment of older adults can be by family members, strangers, health care providers, caregivers, or friends.

Many older adults are too ashamed to report mistreatment. Or they're afraid if they make a report, it will get back to the abuser and make the situation worse. Therefore, family and friends must step in to address any problems. If you suspect an older person is being abused, report what you see to an authority.

Learn about [elder abuse](#) and how to spot the [signs someone is being mistreated](#).

The Caregiver's Handbook

Explore this guide to getting started with caregiving, finding support, and taking care of yourself.

Download or order for free



You may also be interested in

- Learning [how to get started with caregiving](#)
- Finding [services for older adults living at home](#)
- Reading more [articles about caregiving](#)

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For more information

Eldercare Locator

800-677-1116

eldercarelocator@USAgings.org

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

Medicaid

877-267-2323

866-226-1819 (TTY)

Medicaid.gov@cms.hhs.gov

www.medicaid.gov

Medicare

800-633-4227 (1-800-MEDICARE)

877-486-2048 (TTY)

www.medicare.gov

Caregiver Action Network

202-454-3970

info@caregiveraction.org

www.caregiveraction.org

Family Caregiver Alliance

800-445-8106

info@caregiver.org

www.caregiver.org

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