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What Is Long-Distance Caregiving?

[Español](#)

Many people live far away from their family or friends who need help. If you don't live nearby, you can still provide support and assistance as a long-distance caregiver. This article provides information and resources if you find yourself in a long-distance caregiving role.

6 Tips for Long-Distance Caregiving



What tasks can a long-distance caregiver help with?

Long-distance caregivers take on different roles. From a distance, you may be able to:

- Assist with finances, money management, insurance claims, or paying bills
- Arrange for care management or in-home care by hiring formal caregivers such as home health aides

- Order medical equipment, medicines, and other supplies the person needs
- Serve as an information coordinator by researching information about relevant health conditions and medicines, navigating changing needs, and overseeing insurance benefits
- Help with [advance care planning](#), such as choosing a health care proxy and preparing a living will
- Help find, organize, and update [important paperwork and records](#)
- Research [long-term care options](#), such as an assisted living facility or nursing home

You will probably be coordinating these tasks with family, friends, or other caregivers who live nearby. Read more about [sharing caregiving responsibilities with family members](#).

The Caregiver's Handbook

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

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Staying connected from far away

When you don't live close by, it may take more effort to find out what's going on and stay up to date with an older person's needs. Here are some strategies and technologies that long-distance caregivers can use to stay connected:

- Create a list of important phone numbers and email addresses. Keep it in a shared document or spreadsheet online and update it regularly.
- Set up a shared calendar online or in a smartphone app to coordinate with other caregivers.
- With permission, attend the person's [telehealth visits](#). Telehealth visits are remote appointments with health care providers often done with videoconferencing.
- Participate remotely in conference calls or video meetings with the assisted living facility team or nursing home staff.
- Help the older person learn about the features of their mobile or smart phone, such as texting and video calls.



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- If the older person is comfortable using a computer or tablet, set up an email account for them and teach them [how to stay safe online](#). **long-distance caregiving.**

Making the most of a short visit with an aging parent or relative

Talk to the person ahead of time and find out what they would like to do during your visit. Also check with the primary caregiver, if appropriate, to learn what they need. You may be able to handle some of their caregiving responsibilities while you are in town. These conversations can help you set clear-cut and realistic goals for the visit. Decide on your top priorities — that may mean reserving other tasks for a future visit.

Because there's a lot to do during a short visit, it's easy to overlook simply spending time with the person and doing things together. Try to make time for activities unrelated to being a caregiver, such as watching a movie, playing a game, enjoying music, or taking a drive. Finding time to enjoy something simple and relaxing together is good for everyone.

Supporting the person doing day-to-day caregiving

In many cases, one person takes on most of the everyday responsibilities of caring for an older person. It tends to be a spouse or the child or sibling who lives closest. If you are not the primary caregiver, you can still play an important role in supporting that person.

Here are some ways you can help, even if you don't live nearby:

- Ask what you can do that would be most helpful.
- Stay in regular contact with the primary caregiver by phone or email. Just listening may not sound like much, but it can mean a lot.
- Travel to stay with the older person for a few days so the primary caregiver can take a vacation or just have some time off.
- Arrange for regular [respite care](#) in the form of a volunteer, an in-home aide, or an adult day care program.

In time, the older person may have to move to a [residential \(live-in\) facility](#), such as assisted living or a nursing home. If that happens, the primary caregiver will need your support. You can work together to select a facility and coordinate the move. The primary caregiver may need extra support while adjusting to the person's absence and to living alone at home.

You may also be interested in

- Learning about [getting started with caregiving](#)
- Reading [frequently asked questions about caregiving](#)
- Downloading and printing [worksheets](#) to help coordinate caregiving responsibilities

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For more information about long-distance caregiving

Eldercare Locator

800-677-1116

eldercarelocator@USAgings.org

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center

703-256-2084

www.archrespite.org/

Caregiver Action Network

202-454-3970

info@caregiveraction.org

www.caregiveraction.org

Family Caregiver Alliance

800-445-8106

info@caregiver.org

www.caregiver.org

This content is provided by the NIH National Institute on Aging (NIA). NIA scientists and other experts review this content to ensure it is accurate and up to date.

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