

alzheimer's  association®

taking care of yourself

managing stress as
a caregiver



INSIDE ▶
Stress signs card

the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer

10 ways to be a healthy caregiver

Are you so overwhelmed by taking care of someone else that you have neglected your own physical, mental and emotional well-being? If you find yourself without the time to take care of your own needs, you may be putting yourself and your health at risk.

1 Understand what's going on as early as possible

Symptoms of Alzheimer's may appear gradually. It can be easy to explain away unusual behavior when a loved one seems physically healthy. Instead, consult a doctor when you see changes in memory, mood or behavior. Don't delay; some symptoms are treatable.

2 Know what community resources are available

Contact your local Alzheimer's Association. They can help you find Alzheimer care resources in your community. Adult day care, in-home assistance, visiting nurses and Meals-on-Wheels are just some of the services that can help.

3 Become an educated caregiver

As the disease progresses, new caregiving skills are necessary. The Alzheimer's Association can help you better understand and cope with the behaviors and personality changes that often accompany Alzheimer's.

4 Get help

Trying to do everything by yourself will leave you exhausted. Seek the support of family, friends and community resources. Tell others exactly what they can do to help. The Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline and local support groups are good sources of comfort and reassurance. If stress becomes overwhelming, seek professional help.

5 Take care of yourself

Watch your diet, exercise and get plenty of rest. Making sure that you stay healthy will help you be a better caregiver and more able to manage your own stress levels.

6 Manage your level of stress

Stress can cause physical problems (blurred vision, stomach irritation, high blood pressure) and changes in behavior (irritability, lack of concentration, change in appetite). Note your symptoms. Use relaxation techniques that work for you, and talk to your doctor.



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Call us 24/7 for reliable information and support.

1.800.272.3900

www.alz.org

7 Accept changes as they occur

People with Alzheimer's change and so do their needs. They may require care beyond what you can provide on your own. A thorough investigation of community resources – from home care services to residential care – should make transition easier; so will the support and assistance of those around you.

8 Make legal and financial plans

Plan ahead. Consult a lawyer to discuss legal and financial issues including advance directives, wills, estate planning, housing issues and long-term health insurance. Involve the person with Alzheimer's and other family members whenever possible.

9 Give yourself credit, not guilt

Know that the care you provide does make a difference and you are doing the best you can. You may feel guilty because you can't do more, but individual care needs change as Alzheimer's progresses. You can't promise how care will be delivered, but you are making sure that the person with Alzheimer's is well cared for and safe.

10 Visit your doctor regularly

Take time to get regular checkups, and be aware of what your body is telling you. Pay attention to any exhaustion, stress, sleeplessness or changes in appetite or behavior. Ignoring symptoms can cause your physical and mental health to decline.

10 symptoms of caregiver stress

If you experience some of these signs of stress on a regular basis, make time to talk to your doctor.

- 1 Denial** about the disease and its effect on the person who's been diagnosed

I know Mom is going to get better.

- 2 Anger** at the person with Alzheimer's or others, anger that no cure exists or anger that people don't understand what's going on

If he asks me that question one more time I'll scream!

- 3 Social withdrawal** from friends and activities that once brought pleasure

I don't care about getting together with the neighbors anymore.

- 4 Anxiety** about facing another day and what the future holds

What happens when he needs more care than I can provide?

- 5 Depression** that begins to break your spirit and affects your ability to cope

I don't care anymore.

- 6 Exhaustion** that makes it nearly impossible to complete necessary daily tasks

I'm too tired for this.

- 7 Sleeplessness** caused by a never-ending list of concerns

What if she wanders out of the house or falls and hurts herself?

- 8 Irritability** that leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses and actions

Leave me alone!

- 9 Lack of concentration** that makes it difficult to perform familiar tasks

I was so busy, I forgot we had an appointment.

- 10 Health problems** that begin to take their toll, both mentally and physically

I can't remember the last time I felt good.



**For reliable information and support, contact
the Alzheimer's Association:**

1.800.272.3900

www.alz.org

**The Alzheimer's Association
is the leading voluntary
health organization in
Alzheimer care, support
and research.**

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Caregiver stress daily check-up

How many of these signs have I had today?

- Denial
- Anger
- Social withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Exhaustion
- Sleeplessness
- Irritability
- Lack of concentration
- Health problems

Whenever stress is a concern, consult your doctor, and contact the Alzheimer's Association for information and support.