



home

YOUR AT-HOME CARE GUIDE

caring for the caregiver

Northern Illinois Hospice is first in supporting you with the resources you need to ensure the best care. This is one in our series of tip sheets on how to improve safety and well-being in the home environment.

As caregivers, we sometimes become so involved in the day-to-day efforts to keep things going, we may forget to let others know we need additional assistance with providing care, or just getting a break from the work of caring for someone.

Respite care is available through Northern Illinois Hospice volunteers or facility respite. Your Northern Illinois Hospice Social Worker can provide further information.

Some ways to alleviate the burden include:

- **Explore work options.** If you are a working caregiver, discuss your needs with your employer. Telecommuting, flextime, job sharing or rearranging your schedule can help minimize stress. Increasingly, companies are offering resource materials, counseling and training programs to help caregivers.
- **Involve older children.** Older children living at home may be able to provide assistance. Such responsibility can help young people become more empathetic, responsible and self-confident while giving you needed support.
- **Ask others to help.** Ask other family members to share in caregiving. A family conference can help sort out everyone's tasks and schedules. Friends and neighbors may also be willing to provide transportation, respite care and help with shopping, household chores or repairs.
- **Create to-do lists to keep it all straight.** Write lists, such as for grocery shopping, laundry, errands, lawn care, housecleaning, or spending time with your loved one or friends, and put it on the refrigerator or near the front door. If someone says, "Let me know if there is anything I can do to help," you can point to the list.



- **Take a break.** Even if it is only 15 or 20 minutes a day, make sure you do something just for you.
- **Exercise.** Whether it is a 20-minute walk outside or taking a yoga class, exercising is a great way to take a break, decrease stress and enhance your energy.
- **Eat healthy.** Your health and nutrition is just as important as your loved one's, so take the time to eat well. If you are having difficulty, ask for help and get others to fix meals for you.
- **Subscribe to caregiving newsletters for support.**
- **Attend a support group for caregivers.** Check with your doctor, hospice or local Area Agency on Aging for groups that meet for this purpose.
- **Seek professional help.** Many caregivers may feel lonely, anxious, guilty, angry, scared, frustrated, confused, lost or tired. If you feel like these feelings are overwhelming you, call your doctor, hospice or another community resource for help.