

PREPARING FOR CAREGIVING

1. Seek information from reliable sources about ...
 - ... normal changes with aging,
 - ... the nature of the specific illness if that is the reason for care,
 - ... community resources that help caregivers such as home delivered meals, Adult Day Care facilities, home health care aides, family caregiver training, and caregiver support groups.
2. The yellow pages have a section "Home Health Service" listing companies that supply in-home aides. Cost is around \$16 an hour. Their people should be trained with background checks, and there is staff to replace your aide if needed. There are self-employed individuals available for about \$9 an hour but you need to think ahead on how to interview and do a reference check. You also need to think ahead on how to manage the stress involved with caregiving issues such as incontinence, dementia, doctor appointments, etc.
3. Develop a relationship with the person's primary physician. Know what medications are supposed to be taken and the reason for each. If the cost of medication is a burden, ask the physician to prescribe generic if available. Check if the person qualifies for the North Carolina Senior Care prescription discount card (minimum age 65), another pharmaceutical discount card, or a patient assistance program.
4. If more than one physician is involved, all medications should be purchased at one drug store. Get to know the pharmacist. That is your best contact to avoid drug interaction and obtain information if a dosage is missed.
5. It would be best if affairs are in order before caregiving starts. There is a need to address a Will, a Durable Power of Attorney to handle affairs when the person is unable to, a Living Will and a Health Care Power of Attorney.
6. Involve all family members at the start of caregiving. Do not do it alone. As time goes by, you will not be able to do it alone.
7. Do not turn down an offer to help. Be prepared to give the person a choice of tasks that help you or the person cared for: buying groceries, cooking, doing yard work, doing laundry, picking up medication or medical supplies, or sitting with the person for two hours so you can have some time for yourself.
8. If no one offers to help, ask for it. Think ahead and be specific about the help needed. Again, give them a choice of tasks, or ask them to sit with the person for two hours so you can have some time for yourself.

9. Personally visit facilities for adult day care, assisted living and nursing homes before the need occurs. Many of these facilities have waiting lists. Consider placing the care recipient on a waiting list early. You can always postpone admission if the facility contacts you before it is needed.

10. As a caregiver, you can easily become physically and mentally fatigued losing the ability to make good decisions. Planning for you own care is important. You can expect to encounter a range of emotions: uncomfortable intimacy if you have to change and wash a person with incontinence, loneliness due to the time spent in the house, resentment about not being able to have any personal time, anger that other family members do not give more help, guilt about your resentment and anger, impatience with the person you care for, helplessness or frustration because you can not make the situation better, fear of the future, grief and a sense of loss due to changes in your loved one.

Preventing caregiver burnout

- o Studies show that caregiver stress can result in a lowered immune system, physical illness and severe depression.
- o Stay aware of meeting your needs regarding sleep, exercise, personal time and nutrition.
- o Watch for signs of trouble concentrating or becoming abusive when angry.
- o A well-built bridge can take more stress than a poorly-built bridge.
Take an honest look at your current lifestyle.
Take the quiz about your lifestyle on the following page.

REMEMBER TO H.A.L.T.
NEVER LET YOURSELF GET TOO
HUNGRY
ANGRY
LONELY OR
TIRED