

COVID-19 CAREGIVER CHECKLIST #1 – SELF CARE TIPS

Tip #1 - First, Care for Yourself

Self-care is not selfish – it is a necessity! Only when we first help ourselves can we effectively help others. Caring for yourself is one of the most important—and one of the most often forgotten—things you can do as a caregiver. When your needs are taken care of, the person you care for will benefit, too.

Tip #2 - Reduce Stress

The stress you feel is not only the result of your caregiving situation but also other factors. It is important to remember that you are not alone in your experiences.

- Don't wait until you are overwhelmed. Know your own warning signs and act to make changes.
- Identify sources of stress. Sources of stress might be that you have too much to do, family disagreements, feelings of inadequacy, or the inability to say no.
- Identify what you can and cannot change. Ask yourself, "What do I have some control over? What can I change?" Even a small change can make a big difference.
- Take action. Taking some action to reduce stress gives us back a sense of control. Stress reducers can be simple activities like walking and other forms of exercise, gardening, meditation, or talking with a friend. Identify some stress reducers that work for you.

Tip #3 – Set Some Goals

Setting goals or deciding what you would like to accomplish in the next three to six months is an important tool for taking care of yourself. Here are some sample goals you might set:

- Take a break from caregiving.
- Get help with caregiving tasks like bathing and preparing meals.
- Engage in activities that will make you feel more healthy.

Tip #4 – Ask for and Accept Help

Reaching out for help is a sign of personal strength. Many caregivers are reluctant to ask for help. You may not wish to "burden" others or admit that you can't handle everything yourself.

Be prepared with a mental list of ways that others could help you. For example, someone could take the person you care for on a 15-minute walk a couple of times a week. Your neighbor could pick up a few things for you at the grocery store. A relative could fill out some insurance papers. When you break down the jobs into very simple tasks, it is easier for people to help.

Caregiving can be stressful and can pose new challenges during times of uncertainty. If you or your loved one is having a difficult time coping with the outbreak, there are resources available:

- Get support by speaking to a trained counselor at SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or by texting TalkWithUS 66746.
- Contact your physician or your insurance company (if they have a consultation line) to ask health-related questions or to seek mental health support.
- Do things at home that have made you feel better in other stressful situations, such as reading, watching movies, listening to music, playing games, exercising, or engaging in religious activities.

- There are various options open to you for respite care while you care for a loved one. Contact your local [Area Agency on Aging](#) 1-866-243-5678 for respite care options.

Family Caregiver Alliance

<https://www.caregiver.org/Taking-care-you-self-care-family-caregivers>

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration)

<https://www.samhsa.gov/ebp-audience/family-caregivers>

COVID-19 CAREGIVER CHECKLIST #2 – DEMENTIA CARE

Individuals with moderate to severe dementia or another cognitive impairment often require special care and that can present additional challenges to families and caregivers. Diseases like COVID-19 may worsen cognitive impairment due to dementia.

- For people living with dementia, increased confusion is often the first symptom of any illness. If a person living with dementia shows rapidly increased confusion, contact your health care provider for advice.
- People with Alzheimer's disease and all other dementia may forget to wash their hands or take other recommended precautions to prevent the spread of diseases like COVID-19. Caregivers can give extra and/or written reminders and demonstrate proper hand washing technique.
- Caregivers should utilize alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol as an alternative to hand-washing if the person with dementia cannot get to a sink or wash his/her hands easily.
- Ask your pharmacist or doctor about filling prescriptions for a greater number of days to reduce trips to the pharmacy.
- Think ahead and make alternative plans for the person with dementia should adult day care, respite, or other services be modified or cancelled in response to COVID-19.
- Think ahead and make alternative plans for care management for your loved one if you should become sick.
- There are various options open to you for respite care while you care for a loved one. Contact your local [Area Agency on Aging](#) 1-866-243-5678 for respite care options.

View our other caregiver tip sheets on self-care and helping older adults at (insert location).

Alzheimer's Association: [https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/coronavirus-\(covid-19\)-tips-for-dementia-care](https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/coronavirus-(covid-19)-tips-for-dementia-care)

Family Caregiver Alliance

<https://www.caregiver.org/caring-adults-cognitive-and-memory-impairment>

COVID-19 CAREGIVER CHECKLIST #3 – PREVENT THE SPREAD

As a caregiver, it is important to protect the person you care for but also to protect yourself. It is essential to follow all precautions to limit exposure as well as any risk of transmitting the virus.

Wash Hands Regularly and Thoroughly: Wash your hands regularly and ask the children in your house to do the same especially after sneezing, coughing or being in a public place. To make sure, the family is washing hands thoroughly, you can practice washing together and teach each other a 20-second song. Children are taught the correct length of time to wash their hands, using hard to forget songs like Baby Shark and Happy Birthday. Your generation has music that can help pass the time too, whether it's the beginning of Blue Suede Shoes or Splish Splash I Was Taking a Bath, sing together and share a smile.

Avoid Touching Your Face: Avoid touching your own eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands. Remind children of the same. For school-age children, you can make this into a game. For younger children, do your best to have them wash hands regularly after play and before and after eating.

Clean and Disinfect Daily: Focus your daily cleaning and disinfecting on high-touch surfaces in common areas in your home such as tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, desks, toilets, and sinks. For small children focus on their most popular toys. For older children, remind them to regularly wipe down their phones, devices and computer keyboards.

Access Technology: Access to the internet is important for getting current up to date information about the Coronavirus and available resources and supports. It is also important for many students who will be doing homework at home and/or distance learning projects and for older adults to stay connected. Consider alternative ways to communicate with loved ones from a distance:

- Check with your phone, cable, and internet providers who may be offering discounts on equipment and services during this crisis.
- With the right equipment, applications like Skype, WhatsApp, and FaceTime can help you communicate using video while maintaining preventive measures.

Limit exposure: Reduce the need to go out by doing your best to ensure enough supplies such as food and medication are available for at least a two-week period, or maybe more. In many cases, you can mail order the medication and use grocery delivery services, as ways to further protect the older adults in the family. Do not invite visitors into the home.

Back-Up Planning: Planning helps reduce panic and anxiety, so communicate a care plan among family members including back-up plans to provide care should the caregiver become ill.

Additional Tips for Grandfamilies and Multi-Generational Families

Many family households are now multi-generational and include parents, children, and grandparents. While grandparents are being advised to isolate themselves physically from grandchildren, it is nearly impossible for older caregivers to distance themselves from the children they are raising. Today's challenges are making it much tougher to care for them. It's important to stay calm and do everything you can to stay healthy, informed and connected. Here are a few suggestions.

Stay Informed: The Ohio Department of Health has up to date, accurate information and recommendations about COVID-19. <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/>. For information specifically to help grandfamilies, contact your local kinship navigator or other grandfamilies support programs. Visit www.grandfamilies.org for a list of local programs.

Schools and Childcare Centers: Schools and childcare centers are working on solutions to ensure children get access to the food they need. Find out what your school's plans are and how you can access it for your children and, in some cases, for you too.

Stay Connected: Staying home doesn't mean you need to disconnect from friends, family, and other supports. If you are part of a grandparent support group, consider moving your meetings to conference calls or through technologies such as Google hangout. If it's not possible to connect the group, make individual calls to members to check in on each other. If there are other children and teens those in your care connect with during the regular meeting, encourage them to connect through technology. For more ideas check out Generations United's blog <https://buff.ly/3aJN2z8>.

Stay Connected: Utilize resources and activities for children at home.

- <https://extension.wsu.edu/king/4-h/learning-links-4-h-and-more/>
- <http://www.amazingeducationalresources.com/>
- <https://caribu.com/>

[COVID-19 Fact Sheet for Grandfamilies and Multigenerational Families](#)

COVID-19 CAREGIVER CHECKLIST #4 – HELPING OLDER ADULTS

Caregivers often take on the responsibilities of the person they care for while still providing for themselves and other family members. Caregiving is difficult under the best of circumstances and can be significantly more challenging during a pandemic. Caregivers need to consider many things in their unique and critical role.

- Check in on older loved ones regularly by phone, email, and text to combat social isolation. Help loved ones reschedule non-medically necessary doctor's and other health professional appointments.
- Caregivers should know the symptoms how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and what to do if they or their care recipient is experiencing symptoms. The CDC has information on symptoms and testing at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/index.html>
- Monitor the health of your loved one and keep in touch with their medical team. Many health care plans and practices have their own guidelines for how and when they should be contacted about possible COVID-19 exposure or symptoms. If care is needed, call your loved one's primary care doctor and ask how they want you to proceed. You can also help loved ones reschedule non-medically necessary appointments.
- Caregivers should practice extra precaution themselves. It is very important that caregivers think twice about having friends and family members visit them, especially if anyone in the family might be sick. Clean all surfaces that are touched often including counters, tabletops, faucets, light switches, and doorknobs. Use household cleaning sprays or wipes according to the label instructions.
- Know what medications your loved one is taking and see if you can help them have extra on hand. If you have problem getting refills, talk to your pharmacist about what can be done. Many insurance companies are easing limitations on refills during this crisis and allowing 3-months' supply for many medications, except pain medication in some cases. Use mail order pharmacies if that is an option for you. If you need helping getting medications go to [GoodRX](#) or [NeedyMeds](#). Discounted prescriptions information for Ohio residents 60 and over can be found at [Ohio's Best RX](#).
- Monitor food and other medical supplies (oxygen, incontinence, dialysis, wound care) needed and create a back-up plan. Makes sure to have a care plan for who will care for your loved one, if you become sick and communicate your plan to family and friends who can help. If your loved one needs assistance contact your local [Area Agency on Aging](#) at 1-866-243-5678.

View our other caregiver tip sheets on self-care and helping older adults at (insert location).

Caregiver Action Network, Link: <https://caregiveraction.org/covid-19>

National Council on Aging, Link: <https://www.ncoa.org/covid-19/covid-19-resources-for-older-adults/faqs-for-older-adults-caregivers/>