

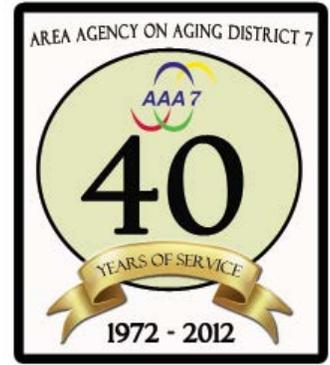
# Caregiver Assistance News

*"Caring for You - Caring for Others"*

**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

[www.aaa7.org](http://www.aaa7.org) **Helping You Age Better!**



**NOVEMBER 2012**

## Using the Healthcare Team Effectively

When you care for someone in the home, you must also manage that person's healthcare. This means choosing a good medical team, keeping costs down, arranging for medical appointments, and finding the best, least expensive medicines. It also means knowing what the insurance rules are and, most importantly, being an advocate (supporter) for the person in your care.

### Share in Medical Decisions

Medical decision-making is in the hands of the person receiving care, the doctor, and the caregiver. Take an active role and become an advocate for yourself and for the person in your care. A patient is the senior partner in the patient-doctor relationship.

### Preparing for a Visit to the Doctor

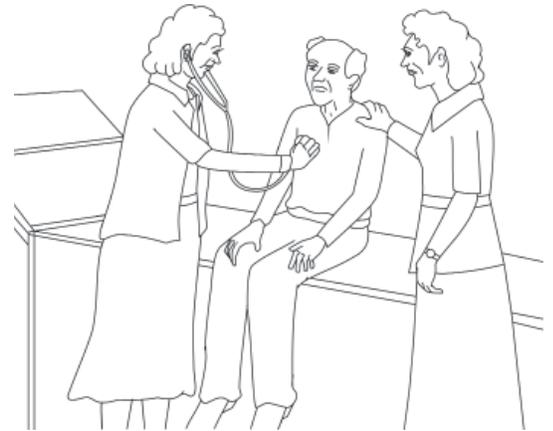
- Be prepared to briefly explain the medical history of the person you are caring for and their family.
- Take a list of questions in order of importance.
- Prepare a list of symptoms the person you care for is experiencing.
- Be prepared to ask for written information on the medical situation so that you can better under-

stand what the doctor is saying. You may want to bring a voice recorder.

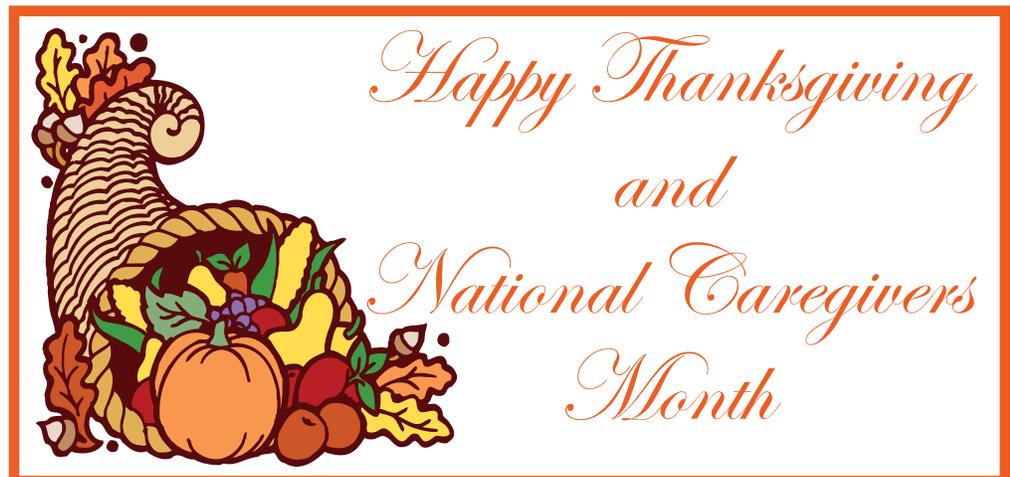
### At the Doctor's Office

Tell the doctor what you hope for and expect from the visit and any recommended treatment. If the doctor tells you to do something you know you can not do, such as giving medication in the middle of the night, ask if there is another treatment and explain why.

Insist on talking about the level of care that you believe is appropriate and that agrees with the care receiver's wishes. Ask about other options for tests, medications and surgery. Ask why tests or treatments are needed and



what the risks are. Consider all options, including the pros and cons of "watchful waiting." Trust your common sense and if you have doubts, gather a second opinion.



# Checklist of Changes to Report to the Doctor

Contact the doctor right away if the following changes occur. Fever may be caused by an infection and should always be reported.



## Ability to Move

- Falls, even if there is no pain
- Leg pain when walking
- Painful or limited movement (color of skin over painful areas should be reported)
- Inability to move

## Diet

- Extreme or lack of thirst
- Weight loss for no reason
- Loss of appetite
- Pain before or after eating
- Difficulty chewing/swallowing
- Pain in the gums or teeth
- Frequent gum infections

## Behavior

- Unusual tiredness or sleepiness
- Unusual actions (arguing, fighting, anger or withdrawal)
- Seeing or hearing things that aren't there (hallucinations)
- Anxiety, increased confusion
- Depression

## Bowel/Bladder

- Bowel movements of an odd color, texture, or amount
- Feeling faint or pain during bowel movements
- Vaginal discharge (report color, odor, amount)
- Sores or pain in groin
- Frequent bathroom breaks
- Frequent bladder infections
- Blood in the urine or kidney pain

## Skin

- Changes in the color of lips, nails, fingers and toes
- Odd skin (color, temperature, rashes, itching, bruises)
- Unusual appearance of surgery incisions
- Pressure sores (bedsores)

## Bones, Muscles and Joints

- Swelling in the arms and legs or around the eyes
- Twitching or movement that cannot be controlled
- Tingling or numbness in hands, feet and other parts of the body
- Warm, tender joints or redness in the joints
- Unusual position of arms, legs, fingers or toes

## Chest

- Chest pain or rapid pulse
- Problems with breasts (report lumps, discharge, soreness or draining)
- Painful breathing (wheezing, shortness of breath)
- Unusual cough
- Unusual saliva or mucus (report color and consistency)

## Abdomen

- Stomach pain/vomiting

## Head

- Dizziness and headaches
- Ear pain, discharge, or change in hearing
- Eye pain, discharge, redness, blurry vision, light sensitivity
- Mouth sores
- Nose pain (bleeding, bad odor to mucus)

*"God heals, and the doctor takes the fees." - Benjamin Franklin*

# Taking Care of Yourself - Battling the Blues

Feeling lonely always hurts, but when it comes to older adults, it may actually contribute to failing health or an early death.

In a study of older adults, the results of which were published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, doctors found that people who reported being lonely were more likely to suffer a decline in health or die over a six-year period than those who were content with their social lives.

Loneliness didn't necessarily mean being alone – almost two-thirds of older adults who reported feeling lonely were married or living with a partner. Researchers defined loneliness as feeling left out or isolated, or lacking companionship.

Loneliness can leave people vulnerable to pain and other discomforts that an active social life could distract them from. If you feel lonely much of the time, seek out companionship. Look around. Do you notice anyone who is lonely and could use a kind word and some companionship?



## National Family Caregivers Month

More than 65 million family caregivers in the U.S. fulfill a vital role on the care team. The National Family Caregivers Association coordinates National Family Caregivers Month as a time to thank, support, educate and empower family caregivers. For Tips and Guides on caregiving and more information, visit [www.thefamilycaregiver.org](http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org)

## How to Watch Out for Someone's Best Interests in the Hospital



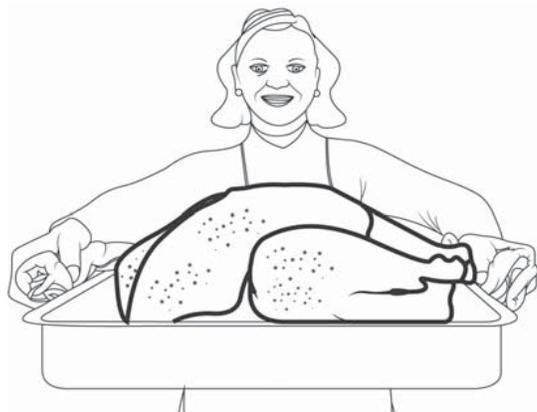
A person in the hospital is at risk, so be ready to keep tabs on treatments, ask questions, and act as an advocate.

- If the Patients' Bill of Rights is not posted in a place where it can be seen, ask for a copy.
- Agree only to treatments that have been thoroughly explained.
- If something is not being done and you think it should be, ask why.
- Be friendly and show respect to hospital staff. They will probably respond better to you and to the person in your care. Bad feelings between family members and staff may cause the staff to avoid the person.
- Assist with the person's grooming and care. Visit often.
- Speak up if you notice doctors or nurses examining anyone without first washing their hands.
  - Check all bills and ask questions about anything that isn't clear to you.



According to federal law, a hospital must release patients in a safe manner or else must keep them in the hospital.

## Live Life Laughing



*"I love Thanksgiving. It is the only day when big thighs are a good thing."*



**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

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*Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton.*

*Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the*

*Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a nurse or social worker who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).*

## Living Wills

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The purpose of a Living Will is to document your wish that life-sustaining treatment, including CPR or technologically-supplied nutrition and hydration, be withheld or withdrawn if you are unable to make informed medical decisions and are in a terminal condition or permanently unconscious state. The Living Will does not affect the responsibility of healthcare personnel to provide comfort care to you. Comfort care describes any measure taken to diminish pain or discomfort, but not to postpone death.

It is important for anyone over the age of 18 to think about completing the proper paper work for a Living Will and Healthcare Power of Attorney. Serious injury or illness can strike at any stage of life.

A **Living Will** applies only when you are terminally ill and unable to communicate your wishes or if you are permanently unconscious.

A **Healthcare Power of Attorney** becomes effective even if you are only temporarily unconscious and medical decisions need to be made.

If you have both documents and become terminally ill and unable to communicate or become permanently unconscious, the Living Will would be followed since it identifies your wishes in these situations.

If you would like more information, please call us at 1-800-582-7277 for a copy of the Advance Directives Packet entitled, "Choices: Living Well at the End of Life."