



Make *Yours* Healthy Choices!



Individualized Care Management, Inc.

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Care for the Caregiver!

Are you caring for a friend or relative who has a chronic health condition or disability? Have you ever stopped to think of your own health? Often times, the stress and pressure of giving care to someone else can lead to health problems for the caregiver.

Here are some ways to help the caregiver take care of their own health:

- **Ask for help.** It can be hard to ask other relatives or friends to assist you when you need it, but specific requests for help will benefit you and the person you are caring for.
- **Arrange for back up.** If you are providing constant care for someone, have a back up plan for those times when you need a break.
- **Find a confidante.** Providing care can be stressful at times. Having someone to talk with about your frustrations can be helpful. A person who needs care can sometimes be angry or depressed about being dependent and may vent negative emotions toward the caregiver. Find a confidante such as a good friend or counselor to share your own emotional burden and learn ways to cope effectively.

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Eating a daily diet that is low in saturated fat and rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains will help keep you in tip top shape. Check with your physician about taking a multivitamin as well.
- **Get enough sleep.** Make sure that you get plenty of sleep every night so that you are well rested and ready to provide care to another person.
- **Get regular exercise.** Try and find a few times during the week that you can dedicate to getting regular exercise. This will help reduce your stress and improve your health.
- **Have routine checkups.** Schedule routine checkups with your health care provider to go over any symptoms of illness.
- **Maintain your sense of humor.** There is nothing funny about a chronic illness, but being able to see humor in difficult situations can bring about much relief. Taking a lighthearted view can alter the meaning of a situation that might otherwise appear overwhelmingly depressing.
- **Keep in touch with your friends.** Maintaining your social life will help you feel connected and reduce your stress.

- **Explore religious beliefs and spiritual values.** Caring for someone with a chronic illness often evokes questions about faith, hope, God and the meaning of life. Organized religion may offer a fresh perspective, but spirituality runs deeper than any particular belief system. Individual and group prayer, rituals, meditation, inspirational reading and spiritual direction may shed light on matters of the soul.
- **Find a support group.** Support groups can be found both locally and online. Here are a few online resources:

<http://www.ec-online.net/>
<http://www.alzonline.net/>
<http://www.caregiving.com/>

Maintaining your health as a caregiver will help you give the best care to another person.



Note: This information is meant to complement the advice of your health care providers, not to replace it. Talk to your doctor if you have any health care concerns.