

## Helpful Tips for Caring for Your Loved One

---

**Create a safe environment at home.** One out of every three older adults falls each year. Almost 3 million are treated in emergency departments for fall-related injuries, and approximately 800,000 of these are hospitalized. Given the high risk of falls, it is a good idea to conduct a safety inspection of your loved one's home. In fact, everyone should do this, especially if you have older adults who live with you or visit you.

**Maintain medical records.** Most care recipients take at least one prescription drug. It's important to keep a list of all medications (including over-the-counter drugs), as well as the dosage or strength, what condition the drug is treating, and how often it is taken. A drug regimen may change often, so be sure to make regular updates to this list.

**Educate yourself.** Learn about each disease or condition that your loved one has, its treatments, and the likely course of the disease. The more information you have, the more you will know what to expect and the better prepared you will be.

**Communicate with health care providers.** In order to be a good advocate for your loved one, you should understand the terminology used by health care providers. Do not be afraid to ask questions if you do not understand something that you hear or read. If you feel like the health care team doesn't fully understand your loved one's needs and concerns, speak up. It's critical that there is good two-way communication between patients and providers. You can play a valuable role helping with this.

**Keep extended family involved and informed.** Host a family meeting with all decision makers. Identify and discuss the issues of providing care for the family member in need. Come up with a plan to share responsibilities and to keep everyone updated regularly.

**Ask for help.** Caregiving can be time consuming and emotionally draining. Don't be afraid to ask for help! Finding ways to free yourself from some responsibilities can be helpful to both you and your care recipient. Remember to be specific when asking for assistance. For example, instead of saying, "I need some help with Dad," ask "Can you stay with Dad for two hours on Friday so I can go to an important appointment?"

**Manage your time.** Keep an appointment book or calendar to schedule your activities, including visits to the doctor. Consider using an online calendar that can be shared with other family members.

**Learn to be an effective caregiver.** There are many resources available to help you become an effective caregiver. While some of your responsibilities may be common sense, others may require further education and training. For example, you may want to learn the safest way to transfer a loved one from a bed to a wheelchair. This can help prevent serious injury to yourself and your care recipient.



**JOHNS HOPKINS**  
M E D I C I N E

---

**JOHNS HOPKINS**  
BAYVIEW MEDICAL CENTER