



American Stroke Association
A division of the American Heart Association.

Together to End Stroke®

Maintaining Health and Well-Being as a Caregiver

If you're a caregiver, caring for yourself is one of the most important things you can do. It's key to maintaining your own health and well-being. When you feel better, you can take better care of your loved one.

Find time for yourself daily. It can be as simple as spending 10 minutes taking

- ❑ **Eat better.** Aim for an overall healthy eating pattern that includes whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean protein (chicken, fish, tofu), nuts, seeds and use non-tropical oils such as olive and canola oils.
- ❑ **Be more active.** Adults should get 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week. Don't have a lot of time? Break it up into smaller increments. Walking is a great way to get started, even if you only walk around the yard.
- ❑ **Get healthy sleep.** Most adults need seven to nine hours each night. Adequate sleep ensures rest and promotes improved mood and energy. It also helps with better brain function including alertness, decision-making, focus, learning, memory, reasoning and problem-solving. Additionally it helps with healing and reduces the risk of chronic disease.

a walk, gardening or starting a book or magazine you have meant to read.

Review the following checklist weekly to make sure you are taking good care of yourself:

- ❑ **Make time for yourself.** Take time every day for an activity you enjoy, such as reading, walking, crafts, cooking or listening to music. Anything that makes you happy and relaxes you can be therapeutic.
- ❑ **Keep humor in your life.** It's true — laughter is good medicine. Try to find humor in your life every day. Find things to laugh about with the loved one in your care — that person needs joy, too.





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- **Get out and about.** At least once a week, break out of your routine and go somewhere enjoyable. Visit the local coffee shop, attend religious events, take a class, visit a friend or just wander around the mall. If your loved one needs constant attention, ask for help.
- **Watch out for depression.** The demands placed on you as a caregiver can be difficult and stressful. If you are experiencing signs of depression, talk to your health care professional. Often, depression can be managed with talk therapy or medication.
- **Take care of business.** Keep your finances under control, work when you need to and don't stop planning for the future. If you allow yourself to be totally immersed in your caregiver responsibilities, it can be harder to go back to your prior life later on. Keep living.
- **Keep medical and dental appointments.** Do all you can to maintain your health. If you're sick, you won't be able to care for your loved one. Ask for help when you need it so you can get away for your own medical appointments and take care of your health and well-being.
- **Think positive.** Take time every day to refresh your mind. Recognize your limitations and make peace with them. Let go of guilt. Pat yourself on the back for the job you're doing. If you're feeling guilty or angry, take a break.
- **Stay connected with the outside world.** Don't allow yourself to become isolated. Stay connected with family and friends, even if it's just by phone or online. Talk to friends about something other than your role as a caregiver.

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