

# Being a Healthy Caregiver

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**As a caregiver, you may find yourself with so many responsibilities that you neglect taking good care of yourself.** But the best thing you can do for the person you are caring for is stay physically and emotionally strong. Here's how:

- [See the doctor](#)
- [Get moving](#)
- [Eat well](#)
- [Tips to help you cope](#)



## See the doctor

Trying to do everything by yourself will leave you exhausted. Don't do it alone. Seek support from family, friends, your faith community and the Alzheimer's Association.

[Find your local chapter.](#)

Be sure to visit your physician regularly (at least annually), and listen to what your body is telling you. Any exhaustion, stress, sleeplessness, or changes in appetite or behavior should be taken seriously. Ignoring these symptoms can cause your physical and mental health to decline.

If you are caring for someone in the late-stages of Alzheimer's, talk to your [health care](#) provider about the seasonal flu shot. Being vaccinated protects both you and the person you are caring for.

## LEARN MORE:

• [Caregiver Depression](#) • [Stress Management](#) • [Late-State Care: Infections](#)

## Get moving

No doubt you know that exercise is an important part of staying healthy — it can help relieve stress, prevent disease and make you feel good. But finding the time to exercise is another story.

Use these tips:

- **Take friends and family members up on their offers to help.**  
You can get in a good workout in a short amount of time — even a 30 minute break. Use our [Care Team Calendar](#) to help coordinate a schedule where you have breaks to exercise and take care of your health.
- **Start small.**  
While it is recommended that you get 30 minutes of physical activity at least five days a week, even 10 minutes a day can help. Fit in what you can, and work toward a goal.



- **Use our [Care Team Calendar](#).** Our free online calendar helps coordinate friends, family and neighbors that offer to help with caregiving. [Learn more.](#)

### **Exercise at home.**

When the person with dementia naps, pull out a yoga mat and stretch, set up a stationary bike, or try exercise tapes.

- **Find something you love.**  
If you enjoy the activity, it will be easier to make it a habit.

There also are many ways you can be active with the person with dementia. Here are a few ideas:

- Take a walk together outside to enjoy the fresh air
- Go to the mall and take a stroll indoors
- Do seated exercises at home
- Dance together to favorite music
- Garden or do other routine activities that you both enjoy

## Eat well

Heart-healthy eating patterns, such as the Mediterranean diet, are good for overall health and may help protect the brain. A Mediterranean diet includes relatively little red meat and emphasizes whole grains, fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts, olive oil and other healthy fats. Try new recipes and involve the person with dementia.

## Need ideas on how to go healthy?

Try these resources:

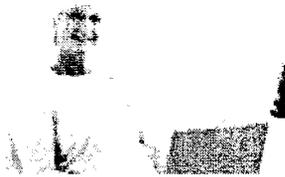
- [Nutrition: Tips for Improving Your Health](#) (American Academy of Family Physicians)
- [Eat Right Nutrition Tips](#) (Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics)
- [Healthy Breakfast: Quick, Flexible Options to Grab at Home](#) (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

## Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter

Get the caregiver support you need through the stages of Alzheimer's. Sign up for e-news and receive helpful caregiving tips, plus updates on the latest Alzheimer's research. **Subscribe now.**

## Five tips to help you cope

### Caregiver Stress Check



Alzheimer caregivers frequently report high levels of stress. [Take our quiz](#) and get resources to help.

- **Manage your level of stress.**  
Consider how stress affects your body (stomach aches, high blood pressure) — and your emotions (overeating, irritability). Find ways to relax. [Learn more.](#)
- **Be realistic.**  
The care you give does make a difference, but many behaviors can't be controlled. Grieve the losses, focus on positive times as they arise, and enjoy good memories.

- **Give yourself credit, not guilt.**

It's normal to lose patience or feel like your care may fall short sometimes. You're doing the best you can. For support and encouragement, join [ALZConnected](#), our online caregiver community.

- **Take a break.**

It's normal to need a break from caregiving duties. No one can do it all by themselves. Look into [respite care](#) to allow time to take care of yourself.

- **Accept changes.**

Eventually your loved one will need more intensive kinds of care. Research [care options](#) now so you are ready for the changes as they occur.

## We Can Help

Caregiving can be overwhelming, but you aren't alone. The Alzheimer's Association is here to help.

- Call our [24/7 Helpline](#): **800.272.3900**
- [Locate a support group](#) in your community
- Visit our [message boards](#)
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Read more: [http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-healthy-caregiver.asp?WT.mc\\_id=enews2013\\_01\\_09#ixzz2HWdTrNMj](http://www.alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-healthy-caregiver.asp?WT.mc_id=enews2013_01_09#ixzz2HWdTrNMj)