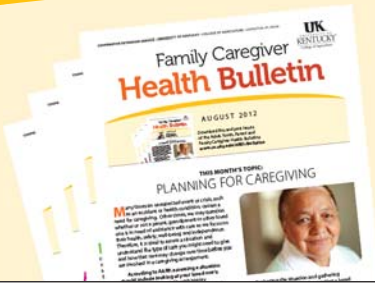


Family Caregiver Health Bulletin



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: PLANNING FOR CAREGIVING

Many times an unexpected event or crisis, such as an accident or health condition, causes a need for caregiving. Other times, we may question whether or not a parent, grandparent or other loved one is in need of assistance with care as we focus on their health, safety, well-being and independence. Therefore, it is ideal to assess a situation and understand the type of care you might need to give and how that care may change over time before you are involved in a caregiving arrangement.

According to AARP, assessing a situation should include looking at your loved one's:

- Medical and mental health history
- Prescription, over-the-counter and herbal medication use
- Legal situation and the status of legal documents
- Financial situation
- Physical appearance and hygiene
- Daily routine, including social life and interests
- Home and community resources
- Safety
- Physical and emotional support system



Evaluating the situation and gathering information helps you plan for meeting a loved one's needs. This can be done on your own or with the help of health care providers. Individual care or geriatric care managers can also be hired to help you assess your situation and connect you to local agencies that provide various resources and services.

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When discussing caregiving and the future, it is important to listen with respect and to be sensitive to feelings and opinions.



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Your local county Extension agent or Area Agency on Aging can also help you locate helpful professionals and services.

We can also prepare for caregiving by talking about our needs and wishes concerning care, end of life care and who will decide for us if and when we can no longer make decisions for ourselves. Such talk can be worked into everyday conversation and over time, more difficult topics can be brought up.

AARP recommends asking your loved one about:

- **Home life** — Is the home a good fit? Are modifications needed to make the environment safer or more comfortable?
- **Daily life and activities** — What is your loved one's daily routine and have any aspects of this routine become difficult? Do any physical or medical ailments get in the way of safety, security and general well-being?
- **Mobility and social life** — Does your loved one get out of the house and if so, how? Is this person engaged in meaningful social activity and hobbies? Are there neighbors or other community members who can help assist with transportation, provide a social outlet or care?
- **Overall health and health care** — Some people feel very private about their health situation. Good times to bring up questions about health include after a visit to the doctor, after prescription pick-ups and refills or after a medical

procedure. Ask older adults to sign a written request to release their medical records to you.

- **Financial life** — Finances can be a delicate and not often talked about subject for many people. But, talking about expenses and budgets regarding caregiving and future care is important for both the well-being of the care recipient and caregiver.
- **Emergency contacts** — Who will your loved one call in case of an emergency? Does the emergency contact have the various contacts and information for the people who might need to be reached in the event of an emergency scenario?

When having conversations about caregiving and the future, it is important to listen with respect and to be sensitive to feelings and opinions. Through conversation, you can build a loving, trusting relationship that encourages honest and open talks about caregiving and decision-making. Open communication reinforces a healthy reciprocal caregiving relationship.

RESOURCES:

- AARP assessing the situation video: www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving-resource-center/info-08-2010/gs_assessing_the_situation_video.html
- AARP assessment checklist: www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving-resource-center/info-08-2010/gs_assessment_checklist.html
- AARP top caregiving challenges: www.aarp.org/content/aarp/en/home/relationships/caregiving-resource-center/info-08-2010/gs_caregiving_challenges.html
- AARP how to assess your loved one's situation: www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving-resource-center/info-08-2010/gs_assess_the_situation.html
- AARP 35 questions to ask your aging parents: www.aarp.org/relationships/caregiving-resource-center/info-08-2010/gs_talking_points.html
- Administration on Aging: www.aoa.gov
- Eldercare locator: www.eldercare.gov
- National Association of Geriatric Care Managers: www.caremanager.org

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Health Bulletin

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