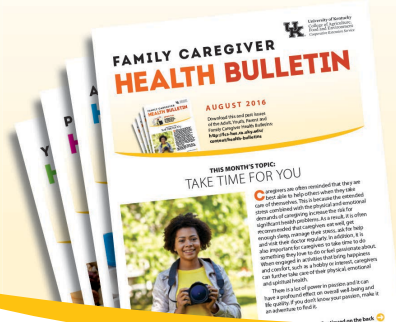




FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN



MAY 2017

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

YOUNG ADULT CAREGIVERS

The word caregiver is most often associated with a middle age or even older adult — someone caring for an aging parent or ill spouse. Yet, 18 percent of young adults age 18-25 are also responsible for caring for frail parents and/or grandparents. This number is expected to rise as couples increasingly chose to have children at later ages. Because there is often no one else or financial resources to help, many of these young adults fall into this role.

While the same caregiving challenges exist despite a caregiver's age, young adults face additional trials and tribulations because of their age. Today's young adults, while the most technologically saturated generation the world has ever seen, are more worried about prom, parties and holding positions as students, university graduates and/or employees than they are about caregiving.

Carefree young adults are taking longer than ever to finish school, leave home, begin their careers, get married and reach other adulthood milestones.



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Family caregiving can be difficult to discuss, but it is a topic that more families need to acknowledge and talk about openly.

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This may be in part because the brain does not fully develop until a person reaches their mid-twenties. In fact, from age 18 to 25, the frontal cortex, the part of the brain that controls impulse, planning and organization, is still developing. As a result, some agree that “emerging adults” are better off making major life decisions in their later twenties.

Challenged to take care of themselves, how then can young adults juggle their own school, work and social lives with the necessary time and decisions related to caregiving? Knowing that the thought of taking care of someone else can be daunting, young adult caregivers are not alone and they do have options.

Know what to expect

Young adults need to be aware of the shift in dependence that takes place with ill parents. Instead of the young adult depending on their parent, the parent will depend on the young adult. This takes adjustment for both parties. While older caregivers may have their family or spouse to turn to for support, young adult caregivers often carry this burden on their own and their peers may not relate. As a result, time and energy dedicated to caregiving can feel lonely and overwhelming and it can, in turn, affect school, career, personal life and finances.

Learn what it takes to be a caregiver

Older caregivers, who are more likely going to be finished with school, secure in work and/or retirement and settled socially are sometimes taken more serious due to experience, maturity and proven credibility. As a result, they may be more likely to reach out for and receive help. Young adults often have to work hard to demonstrate their abilities and this in turn can affect their loved one's care.

Young adults need to know that caregiving involves:

- Legal access to health records, insurance information and financial documents
- Competence to make legal and medical decisions about a person's care

- Time to get loved ones to appointments, to help with activities or instrumental activities of daily living
- Knowledge of illnesses, diseases and proper standard of care treatments
- Advocating for your loved one with medical, legal and long-term care professionals

Find support

While overlooked, young adults are not in this alone. In addition to calling your local Extension Office, it can also be helpful to contact:

- **The Kentucky Department of Aging and Independent Living/Area Agencies on Aging** (800) 372-2973, <http://chfs.ky.gov/dail/AreaAgenciesonAging.htm>
- **National Family Caregiver Support Program** (800) 677-1116, https://aoa.acl.gov/AoA_Programs/HCLTC/Caregiver
- **Alzheimer's Association** (800) 272-3900, <http://www.alz.org>

Family caregiving can be a tough situation to discuss, but it is a topic that more families need to acknowledge and talk about openly so that members can be prepared mentally, physically and financially.

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