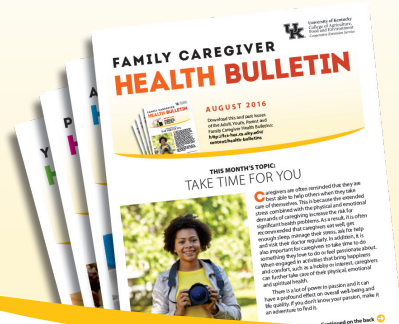




FAMILY CAREGIVER

HEALTH BULLETIN



DECEMBER 2019

Download this and past issues of the Adult, Youth, Parent and Family Caregiver Health Bulletins:
<http://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/content/health-bulletins>

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

DEMENTIA CAREGIVING: TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF



According to the Alzheimer's Association, more than 16 million Americans provide care for people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. The estimated 18.5 billion hours of care they provide is valued at approximately \$234 billion, and numbers are on the rise.

Family caregivers are a treasured resource, but caregiving can come with a toll. Many caregivers of people with Alzheimer's are older themselves and have

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Caregivers should set aside personal time for hobbies, and should set health goals like eating healthy and exercising.

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their own physical disabilities or frailties to contend with. Others are not ready for a “caregiving career” because they are balancing their own career in addition to raising a family. Despite the personal satisfaction that can come with caring for a loved one, it is not uncommon for dementia caregiving to cause physical, emotional, and financial stress.

Because Alzheimer’s disease is progressive, caregiving goes beyond hands-on care. It includes anticipating future support needs, monitoring and supervising, preserving a person’s sense of self, and helping an individual adapt to new roles. Caregivers are further challenged when they are met with resistance, agitation, and overall lack of awareness. As a result, family caregivers are at higher risk for anxiety, stress, and depression. Prevention and promoting self-care are therefore priorities because without dementia caregivers, the care system for those living with the disease would collapse.

To help you be the best caregiver possible, improve your coping skills. Research demonstrates that when we take care of ourselves, we become more resilient and a better caregiver for those who depend on us.

- **Ask for help.**
- **Accept help.**
- **Educate yourself about the disease** and caring for someone with the disease.
- **Make adaptations to activities** of daily living (simple communication and directions; only lay out items that the person will use when they are going to bed, for example; assist as necessary).

Research demonstrates that when we take care of ourselves, we become more resilient and a better caregiver for those who depend on us.

- **Problem-solve** (think about why something is happening and try to figure out the meaning behind odd behavior).
- **Protect your independence** (take time for your own interests, activities, and hobbies).
- **Set realistic goals** (break big tasks into smaller steps, prioritize your to-do lists, establish a routine, and learn to say “no”).
- **Set personal health goals** (create a sleep routine, exercise 30 minutes a day, eat healthy, drink water).
- **Celebrate small moments.**
- **Join a support group.**

Participate in a dementia care survey research study:

If you care for a loved one with dementia, live in Kentucky and are at least 18 years old, the University of Kentucky Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension and the University of Louisville’s Kent School of Social Work invite you to participate in an online survey about dementia care experiences. The purpose of the survey is to learn more about dementia service needs and service delivery preferences for those who provide care to someone with dementia. Your feedback will help inform efforts related to reducing caregiver burden. Participants will be eligible to enter a drawing for a \$50 gift card.

https://louisvillekent.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3gTJrePrDM9sRBr

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