

YOUR TIME



Meet the challenge: Be an effective caregiver

A supportive family can help an elderly person cope with the natural changes in aging. Support to the elderly relative may range from encouragement to housing.

A phone call helps

Helping an elderly relative feel emotionally secure is important. Regular contact through visits, calls and letters are ways to stay in touch. Share special occasions such as holidays and birthdays.

Each family's situation is different. The elderly often need families to assist and support their decision-making. Family members may need to express their views and discuss all the available options. Be open and honest. Talk things over with a family doctor.

Family members should share responsibility for an elderly relative's well-being. It can be a difficult job. Stress occurs when a loved one has changes in personality and behavior.

Use the resources in your county

Remember – there are ways to make the job easier. To help an elderly relative remain independent, you may need to locate and coordinate resources. In Genesee County, the following services may be found in the phone book:

- **Visiting nurses** can help a loved one through a temporary illness or a chronic condition. If you rely on this service, you may find that you don't feel as worried because you know a health professional is monitoring the situation.
- **Delivered meals** can ensure the proper nutrition. This is especially helpful for people who find it difficult to prepare their own food due to arthritis or other ailments.
- **Lawn care services** can help loved ones remain in their own home, where they are sure to feel more comfortable and will be better able to maintain their own independence.
- **Home health care professionals** can provide part-day or round-the-clock health care either temporarily – while a loved one recovers from surgery, for example – or permanently, which could keep a loved one at home instead of in a costly and less personal nursing home.
- **Household helpers** can clean, perform small chores and generally help to upkeep a house or apartment. They may visit once a week or once

a month or another time frame.

- **Senior centers** offer a broad range of activities, from bowling or dancing to rides to the movies or a trip to a shopping center. They also may serve meals and may even provide transportation. This resource allows a loved one to escape isolation and find enjoyable activities.
- **Day care facilities** for the elderly are similar to day care centers for children. Adults can arrange for a few hours of care per day or care for entire days. Some facilities are geared toward specific illnesses. For example, one center may specialize in Alzheimer's patients. By using this service, caregivers can give themselves a break whenever they need it. Some people drop off their loved ones, so they can go grocery shopping once a week or so they can have a few hours of free time. Some families use the weekend option, so they can go away or simply stay home.

Take care of yourself, too

To provide the best care for a frail elderly person, you must take care of yourself. Caring for someone often means less time for caregivers. Plan free time, Relax and enjoy a hobby.

Discuss feelings with a trusted friend, family member or minister. You may feel guilt, anger and the effects of stress. Talk over conflicts and resolve problems as they arise.

Join a support group of people who share common concerns. They may have valuable information, and shared burdens are less heavy. If you need more help

Talk it over with a counselor.

An understanding professional can help with some of the hard decisions and difficult feelings. For help in an emergency, call GHS Crisis Services at (810) 257-3740 or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where a counselor is available 24 hours a day. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. For non-emergency services, call (810) 257-3742. ©

www.genhs.org

