

# Healthy People

## November is National Family Caregivers Month

Over the course of our lifetime, many of us will find ourselves taking care of a loved one with a disease or disability who may need temporary or long-term assistance with daily activities. Being a caregiver, or what is often referred to as a "care partner," can be fulfilling by offering the opportunity to provide a loved one, friend, or neighbor with needed help and reassurance. However, this role can also affect the life of the care partner in significant and often challenging ways

The term family caregiver or caregiver has become common in our culture over the last decade. A caregiver is anyone who provides physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, or logistical support to a loved one with a chronic, disabling or life-threatening illness.

Many people in this situation do not immediately identify with the term "caregiver." You may not believe that it fits you, especially if you feel that you're "just doing what I'm supposed to do." You may even believe that drawing attention to your own needs will somehow detract from the efforts to help your loved one. Being a caregiver is, however, an important role to recognize.

Here are some quick facts about caregiving in the United States, from the Administration on Aging (AOA):

- 65.7 million caregivers make up 29 percent of the U.S. adult population.
- An estimated 66 percent of caregivers are female. One-third take care of two or more people, and the average age of a female caregiver is 48.
- Many caregivers of older people are older adults themselves. Of those caring for a person older

than 65, the average age of caregivers is 63, with one-third of these caregivers in fair to poor health.



## 10 Tips for Family Caregivers

- Seek support from other caregivers. You are not alone!
- Take care of your own health so that you can be strong enough to take care of your loved one.
- Accept offers of help and suggest specific things people can do to help you.
- Learn how to communicate effectively with doctors.
- Caregiving is hard work so take respite breaks often.
- Watch out for signs of depression and don't delay in getting professional help when you need it.
- Be open to new technologies that can help you care for your loved one.
- Organize medical information so it's up to date and easy to find.
- Make sure legal documents are in order.
- Give yourself credit for doing the best you can in one of the toughest jobs there is!