



What Is Caregiver Burnout?

Caregiver burnout is caused by long-term stress that can affect your physical, emotional and mental well-being. You become overwhelmed trying to meet the constant demands of your caregiving role. It can have a negative effect on how you care for yourself and your loved one.

Many caregivers don't take time to care for themselves and they begin to show signs of caregiver burnout.

Your health and well-being benefit your loved one just as they benefit you. Learn the signs of caregiver burnout and seek help if you're having them.



What are the signs of caregiver burnout?

As a caregiver, you're under a lot of stress. Long-term stress can lead to health problems. So, watch out for signs of burnout, including:

- Denial about your loved one's condition.
- Anger toward the person you're caring for.
- Social withdrawal from friends and activities you enjoy.
- Anxiety about caregiving responsibilities.
- Depression and anxiety.
- Exhaustion and lack of energy to do things.
- Losing control physically or emotionally.
- Trouble falling or staying asleep.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Unhealthy behaviors such as drinking or smoking too much.

If you're experiencing any of these warning signs, take steps to get your life back into balance.

How can I avoid burnout?

Take it one day at a time. You can take steps to avoid caregiver burnout by:

- Learning more about your loved one's condition and how to manage it.
- Discussing your feelings with a friend or joining a support group for caregivers.
- Finding out what caregiving resources are available in your community.
- Asking for and accepting help from others.
- Using day care or respite care so you can take time for yourself.
- Using relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga or breathing exercises.
- Taking care of yourself by eating well, exercising and getting plenty of rest.
- Talking to a counselor or therapist, if needed.

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What can I do about depression?

Depression is a serious illness and can keep you from being a good caregiver. Learn the signs of depression and get help if you experience several of these symptoms for two weeks or more.

- Feelings of hopelessness, sadness or anxiety.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities.
- Feeling worthless or guilty.
- Change in appetite or weight.
- Loss of energy or fatigue.
- Sleeping too much or too little.
- Lack of interest in personal hygiene.
- Lack of interest in sex.
- Inability to concentrate or make decisions.

Depression can often be treated with medication. If you need help dealing with your emotions, find a support group or counselor. If you have thoughts of death or suicide, seek help immediately.



If you are suffering from caregiver burnout, joining a support group may be a good way to deal with your emotions.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at HeartInsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

What caregiving resources are available in my community?

Should I be on medication for depression?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.