

# Care giver's Stress

## What is caregiver stress?

Caregiver stress is the emotional and physical strain of caregiving. It can take many forms. For instance, you may feel:

- frustrated and angry taking care of someone with dementia who often wanders away or becomes easily upset
- guilty because you think that you should be able to provide better care, despite all the other things that you have to do
- lonely because all the time you spend caregiving has hurt your social life
- exhausted when you go to bed at night

Caregiver stress appears to affect women more than men. About 75 percent of caregivers who report feeling very strained emotionally, physically, or financially are women.

## National Health Information Center - Recommendation:

### Manage Stress

#### The Basics

Preventing and managing stress can help lower your risk of serious health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, and depression. You can prevent or lessen stress by:

- Planning ahead
- Preparing for stressful events

Some stress is hard to avoid. You can find ways to manage stress by:

- Noticing when you feel stressed
- Taking time to relax
- Getting active and eating healthy
- Talking to friends and family


## What are the signs of stress?

When people are under stress, they may feel:

- Worried
- Irritable
- Depressed
- Unable to focus

Stress also affects the body. Physical signs of stress include:

- Headaches
- Back pain
- Problems sleeping
- Upset stomach
- Weight gain or loss
- Tense muscles
- Frequent or more serious colds

Use this tool to better [understand your stress](http://www.healthcalculators.org/calculators/stress.asp) (<http://www.healthcalculators.org/calculators/stress.asp>). 

## What causes stress?

Stress is often caused by some type of change. Even positive changes, like marriage or a job promotion, can be stressful. Stress can be short-term or long-term.

Common causes of short-term stress include:

- Too much to do and not much time
- Lots of little problems in the same day (like a traffic jam and running late)
- Getting lost
- Having an argument

Longer-term stress can be caused by things like:

- Divorce or problems in a marriage
- Death of a loved one
- Illness
- Caring for someone who is sick
- Problems at work
- Money problems

## What are the benefits of managing stress?

Managing stress can help you:

- Sleep better
- Control your weight
- Get sick less often and heal faster
- Lessen neck and back pain
- Be in a better mood
- Get along better with family and friends

## Take Action!

Being prepared and in control of your situation will help you feel less stress. Follow these nine tips for preventing and managing stress.

### 1. Plan your time.

Think ahead about how you are going to use your time. Write a to-do list and decide which tasks are the most important. Be realistic about how long each thing will take.

### 2. Prepare yourself.

Prepare ahead of time for stressful events like a job interview or a hard conversation with a loved one.

- Picture the event in your mind.
- Stay positive.
- Imagine what the room will look like and what you will say.
- Have a back-up plan.

### 3. Relax with deep breathing.

Learn how easy it is to [use deep breathing to relax](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_relief_meditation_yoga_relaxation.htm#deep) ([http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress\\_relief\\_meditation\\_yoga\\_relaxation.htm#deep](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_relief_meditation_yoga_relaxation.htm#deep)). 

### 4. Relax your muscles.

Stress causes tension in your muscles. Try stretching or taking a hot shower to help you relax. [You can do these stretches at your desk](http://dohs.ors.od.nih.gov/ergo_computers.htm#muscular) ([http://dohs.ors.od.nih.gov/ergo\\_computers.htm#muscular](http://dohs.ors.od.nih.gov/ergo_computers.htm#muscular)).

### 5. Get active.

Physical activity can help prevent and manage stress. It can also help relax your muscles and improve your mood. Try a new activity like yoga or gardening.

Aim for 2 hours and 30 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity, like walking fast or biking. Be sure to exercise for at least 10 minutes at a time. Do strengthening activities (like sit-ups or lifting weights) at least 2 days a week.

**6. [Eat healthy.](#)**

Give your body plenty of energy by eating fruits, vegetables, and protein.

**7. [Drink alcohol only in moderation.](#)**

Don't rely on alcohol and drugs to manage your stress. If you choose to drink, drink only in moderation. This means no more than one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men.

**8. [Talk to friends and family.](#)**

Tell your friends and family if you are feeling stress. They may be able to help.

**9. [Get help if you need it.](#)**

If your stress doesn't go away or keeps getting worse, you may need help. Over time, stress can lead to serious problems like depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or anxiety.

These conditions can be treated with talk therapy (called psychotherapy) or medicines. If you are feeling down or hopeless, [talk to a doctor about depression](#). Visit this Web site to [learn more about anxiety](#) (<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>).

A mental health professional (like a psychologist or social worker) can help you deal with stress. Stress is a normal part of life, and lots of people need help to manage it better.

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