

Prevention report



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The Latest News on Prevention in the United States.

A PREVENTION REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL HEALTH INFORMATION CENTER

Family Caregivers—Overview

Family caregivers provide long-term care services for sick, frail, and/or disabled persons in the United States. Family caregivers are spouses, adult children, and other relatives and friends—people who may not think of themselves as caregivers. These “informal” (and unpaid) caregivers provide basic care to their loved ones who have chronic medical conditions such as dementia, cancer, diabetes, and other illnesses. Caregivers typically provide help with activities of daily living (ADL) such as bathing, dressing, toileting, eating/feeding, walking, symptom management, and lifting/transferring. They may also help with household chores such as cleaning, shopping, and meal preparation; giving medications and medical treatments; paying bills; and providing emotional support.

Health Problems of Caregivers

Caregiving is both physically and emotionally demanding. In fact, caregivers are often described as “hidden patients.” This is because caregivers tend to their loved ones’ health and well-being, but don’t always take care of their own health.

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November Is National Family Caregivers Month

National Family Caregivers (NFC) Month in November is designated as a time to thank and support family caregivers, to draw attention to the many challenges that family caregivers face, and to raise awareness about programs that support family caregivers.

For more information about NFC Month and ways that organizations can celebrate NFC, visit www.thefamilycaregiver.org; www.thefamilycaregiver.org/national_family_caregiver_month/ or call 1-800-896-3650. ❖



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Research has shown that family caregivers are at risk for a number of health problems. The Administration on Aging (AoA) provides more information on the impact of caregiving on caregivers in their FAQ Concerning Family Caregivers ([www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/careprof/TownHall/Question%20and%20Answer%20\(Final%20Version\).doc](http://www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/careprof/TownHall/Question%20and%20Answer%20(Final%20Version).doc)) and their fact sheet on caregivers ([www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/careprof/TownHall/One-page%20factsheet%20\(final%20version\).doc](http://www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/careprof/TownHall/One-page%20factsheet%20(final%20version).doc)).

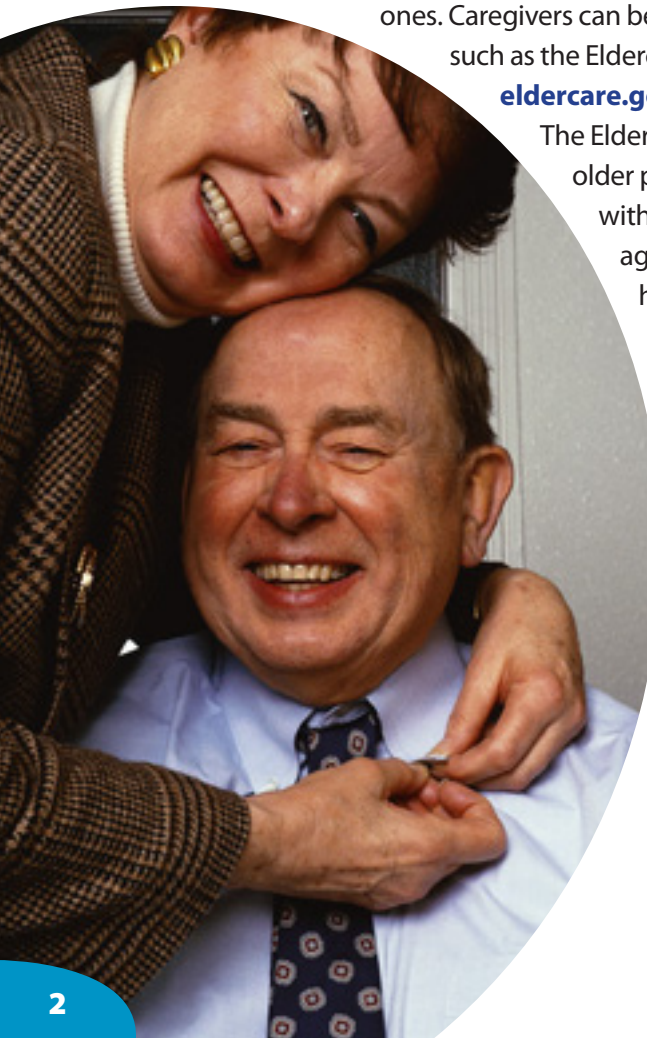
Caregiving can also be rewarding. Many caregivers find meaning and satisfaction in caring for a loved one. Womenshealth.gov provides some personal testimonials about the positive aspects of caregiving (www.4women.gov/editor/2007/11/). A study published in the Archives of Internal Medicine found that over two-thirds of informal caregivers found caregiving personally rewarding, despite the real costs emotionally, physically, and financially (archinte.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/167/1/40).

Other sources on caregiver health risks

- American Academy of Family Physicians: A Practical Guide to Caring for Caregivers: www.aafp.org/afp/20001215/2613.html
- American Medical Association—Caregiver Health: www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/5099.html

Public health professionals can encourage caregivers to take care of themselves, so they will be able to help their loved ones. Caregivers can be referred to services such as the Eldercare Locator (at www.eldercare.gov, or 1-800-677-1116).

The Eldercare Locator connects older persons and caregivers with State and local agencies to provide home and community-based services. These services might include meals, home care, transportation, respite care, financial help, or caregiver training. Federal and State programs may help to pay for some services such as respite care. ❖



Family caregivers are spouses, adult children, and other relatives and friends—people who may not think of themselves as caregivers.

RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS

Administration on Aging Caregiver Resource Room:

www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/caregiver.asp

National Alliance for Caregiving:

www.caregiving.org/

Family Caregiver Alliance:

www.caregiver.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Administration on Aging:

www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/careprof/proguidance/resources/resources.asp

National Family Caregivers Support Program, administered by AoA:

www.aoa.gov/press/fact/pdf/National%20Family%20Caregiver%20Support%20Program.pdf

AARP:

www.aarp.org

Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving:

www.rosalynncarter.org/

Caregiver Interventions

The Rosalynn Carter Institute (RCI) on Caregiving has been working to identify evidence-based caregiver interventions—those that have a documented record of positive outcomes for caregivers. RCI's Evidenced-Based Caregiver Intervention Resource Center provides information on interventions that have been tested in randomized controlled trials (RCT) and have been strongly linked to desirable outcomes. Over 60 studies are currently listed on the Center's Web site, which will continue to be updated: www.rosalynncarter.org/dynamic_grid/. Information on intervention programs can also be found on the AoA's Web site: www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprof/caregiver/careprof/TownHall/townhall_12_16_03.asp—A Compendium of Intervention and Descriptive Studies Designed to Promote the Health of Caregivers for Older Adults.

Factors for Success

Translating research into practice is often difficult. An intervention or program may not be successful for many reasons, including poor implementation or followup, and inadequate staff or caregiver training. RCI lists on their Web site some factors that can make interventions successful—www.rosalynncarter.org/effective2/. ❖

Components of Successful Interventions

- Regular contact with a caregiver over time
- Specific intervention protocols to follow based on the caregivers' needs
- Knowledge, skill building, problem-solving and counseling techniques
- A combination of home visits, telephone followup, and technology such as Internet and telehealth
- Locally developed programs with collaboration from area agencies ❖

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT CAREGIVERS

- More than 44 million people are informal caregivers.
- Women are more likely to provide informal care than men.
- The average caregiver is 46 years of age.
- Over half of all caregivers are employed on a full-time basis.
- Family caregiving has been a budget saver to Medicaid and Medicare. The economic value of informal and family caregiving has been estimated at \$306 billion annually.
- Informal care plays a major role in preventing or delaying the need of a disabled older person to go to a nursing home.

Spotlight on a successful intervention— Southern Illinois Rural Caregiver Telehealth Project

The Telehealth Project is designed to address the needs of caregivers in rural areas, where caregiving resources may not be as readily available. Caregivers are provided with stress coping skills either through an 8-week structured intervention with telephone counseling sessions—or through the Telehelp call-in line. In the structured program, caregivers are taught problem-solving and stress management skills and how to seek help. Caregivers who completed the project's structured, eight-session counseling program have reported significantly less stress. Positive outcomes were particularly evident with highly distressed and overwhelmed caregivers.

For more information, visit www.rosalynncarter.org/dynamic_grid/details/page1195051376/ or www.tlc.siu.edu/tlc/. ❖



National Family Caregivers Support Program

The Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000 led to the creation of the National Family Caregivers Support Program (NFCSP). This vital program was established by AoA (of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). Through NFCSP, States partner with local agencies on aging, faith- and community-based providers, and tribes.

NFCSP's Web site has more information on services and eligibility—www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/caregiver.asp.

What Services Does NFCSP Provide?

NFCSP provides funding for States to work in partnership with local agencies on aging, faith- and community-based service providers, and tribes to offer five basic services for family caregivers.

These include:

1. Information for caregivers about available services
2. Help for caregivers in gaining access to services
3. Individual counseling, organization of support groups, and training for caregivers to help them make decisions and solve problems related to their caregiving roles
4. Respite care to temporarily relieve caregivers from their caregiving responsibilities
5. Supplemental services on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by caregivers ❖

FACTS ABOUT NFCSP

- The program is currently funded at \$162 million.
- NFCSP serves more than 750,000 caregivers nationwide.

LINKS FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT NFCSP

www.aoa.gov/press/fact/pdf/National%20Family%20Caregiver%20Support%20Program.pdf

AoA Caregiver Resource Room: www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/caregiver.asp

www.aoa.gov/prof/aoaprogram/caregiver/careprof/proguidance/resources/resources.asp

