

Top 10 Ways to Manage Eldercare

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In 2010, nearly half of the American workforce will be caring for an elderly parent. The daunting tasks can include administering medications, shuttling to doctor appointments, and sorting through medical coverage and bills. This can mean extra days off or even having to quit your job. Here are some tips to help ease the burden:

1. Know what to expect.

Understanding common progressive conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease, is crucial. Close communication with doctors can help you better plan for caregiving needs.

2. Carefully review Medicare and supplemental insurance.

Be sure that medications, long-term care and other needs are all covered.

3. Keep current records.

An online personal health record can be a convenient way to track medical history, medications, etc.

4. Expect "live-in" adjustments.

Be prepared for readjustments in mealtimes and sleep schedules, and to experience a "role reversal" in your relationship, placing you in the parenting role.

5. Hold a family meeting.

A social worker or other facilitator can help with difficult issues, such as placement in assisted living or a skilled nursing facility.

6. Make a hospital discharge plan.

If you can't care for your loved one at home, a hospital discharge planner can help with transferring to a rehabilitation facility or nursing home, or with setting up in-home care.



Caregivers can be more prone to stress, depression, colds and serious illnesses. Keep up with your own doctor visits.

7. Discuss advance directives.

Living wills detail medical care preferences. A power of attorney for healthcare document allows your parent to designate another person to make financial or medical decisions, should your parent become unable to do so.

8. Take care of YOU.

Caregivers can be more prone to stress, depression, colds and serious illnesses. Keep up with your own doctor visits.

9. Get support for yourself.

Local organizations may offer adult day care, emergency respite and support groups.

10. Investigate eldercare products.

Work with the case manager and/or insurance company to locate emergency call buttons, stair chair lifts, electric scooters and other helpful items.

Once you are caring for your loved one, don't underestimate the value of a personal health advocate to help alleviate some of the day-to-day stress and confusion. There are many for- and non-profit health advocacy organizations that can help you find doctors and make appointments, arrange transportation, adult day care, long-term care, or in-home care, and untangle medical bills and much more. Check with your employer - many companies offer health advocacy benefits to their employees. If not, check online with your local chamber of commerce or with your local doctor, hospital, church, or community center.

Martin B. Rosen is Co-founder, Chief Marketing Officer, and Executive Vice President of Health Advocate, Inc., and an accomplished marketing executive with broad-based experience in brand building. Previously, he served as the Head of Communications for Aetna U.S. Healthcare.

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