

How to be an Effective Caregiver for a Person with Heart Failure



Heart failure is a diagnosis that not only impacts the person diagnosed, it impacts their support system too. Sometimes becoming a caregiver can be an unfamiliar and challenging role. The caregiver role is fluid; as your loved one's condition changes, so may your role. At times, you may need to be more or less involved. There are many ways caregivers can be helpful in assisting their loved one.

Some important tasks and roles of a caregiver are to:

- Buy groceries and help make meals
- Assist with household chores (cleaning, laundry)
- Provide transportation
- Arrange and attend medical appointments
- Monitor medications and help with prescription refills
- Talk with doctors, nurses, care managers, and others to understand what needs to be done

How do I care for myself?

Caring for yourself is one of the most important things you can do as a caregiver. When your needs are taken care of, you will be a more effective and loving caregiver. There are self-care practices you can use to help make the situation more manageable for yourself.

Below are some effective ways to care for yourself:

- Make your health a priority. Eat well, stay active, and get plenty of sleep.
- Be patient – it is not unusual for your loved one to have good or bad days.

- Share your feelings with someone you trust, or join a support group.
- Build your personal support network. It is important to have a team of people who can help you.
- Ask for help. Be specific on how others can help you, don't try to do it all yourself.
- Let your doctor know if your responsibilities as a caregiver are making you feel depressed or anxious.
- Make time for yourself each day. Do something you enjoy and find relaxing.

What other resources are available?

Caregivers need a range of support to remain healthy, improve their caregiving skills and remain in their caregiving role. The resources below can help:

AARP: Family Caregiving

<https://tinyurl.com/bt23zgu>

This site provides both practical and emotional information on caregiving, including webinars and videos. An Online Community is also available.

American Heart Association: Caregiver Support

<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/caregiver-support>

This section provides information on the rights and responsibilities of caregivers, as well as lifestyle and communication tips.

Caregiver Action Network (CAN)

<http://www.caregiveraction.org/>

CAN is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering family caregivers to act on behalf of themselves and their loved ones, and to remove barriers to their health and wellbeing.

Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA): Caregiving Info & Advice

<https://www.caregiver.org/>

FCA's mission is to improve the quality of life for caregivers and those they care for through information, services, and advocacy.

Family Caregiver Council

<http://familycaregivercouncil.com/>

Leaders of national family caregiver organizations, innovative companies in the active aging space, and aging experts have joined together to form a resource to support the family caregiver.

Heart Failure Society

<https://hfsa.org/patient-hub/patient-tools>

Educational tools and resources to help patients and caregivers.

Lotsa Helping Hands

<http://lotsahelpinghands.com/>

This site lets you create a Care Community and then invite friends and family to join. This can help with coordination of care and include a schedule and tasks which community members can volunteer for.

National Alliance for Caregiving

<http://www.caregiving.org/>

The National Alliance for Caregiving is a non-profit coalition of national organizations focusing on advancing family caregiving through research, innovation and advocacy. Their site also provides information for caregivers.

National Institute on Aging

<https://tinyurl.com/yxmpeqpx>

Make Yourself a Priority, Too: Tips for Caregivers

Michigan Medicine Care Guides: Advance Directives Toolkit

<http://careguides.med.umich.edu/advance-directives>

Visit this site to find information on the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (DPOA-HC) form which is the most widely used Advance Directive in the State of Michigan.

Michigan Medicine Social Work Support Services

Call the Frankel Cardiovascular Center Social Work office at (734) 232-1559 to talk to our Clinic Social Worker.

**Together in HF (American Association of Heart Failure Nurses):
Caregiving**

<https://www.togetherinhf.com/group/3>

Provides information and tips for caregivers of heart failure patients.

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