

Preparing Caregivers during COVID-19

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention, older adults and individuals with chronic health conditions are at higher risk for serious illness from the coronavirus (COVID-19).

With already more than 40 million family caregivers helping loved ones with care in the U.S., we expect the virus to increase the number of family caregivers who are providing short-term or long-term care to an older loved one.

AARP wants to offer some guidance to family caregivers, specifically to help them tackle how to create a plan for those they are caring for, and supporting those new to caring for someone due to the virus impacting more of the older population.

1. Pull Together a Team

- Put together a list of individuals in your family or friend network and services in your community that can help you perform some key caregiving tasks.
- Find out if services such as Meals on Wheels can help deliver meals, or if there are other local services to help with food or medication delivery.

2. Inventory Essential Items

- Determine how much food, medication, and basic supplies the person you're caring for has on hand. We recommend, if possible, having a 2-week supply of the following items: food, water, house cleaning supplies, and medical supplies/equipment.

3. Get Medications in Order and Ask for Extra

- Make sure you have a list of medications, medical contacts, and know where to find healthcare documents like advanced directives. If there are upcoming routine medical appointments, reschedule those or switch to a virtual visit or telehealth. Medicare has temporarily expanded its coverage of telehealth services, call your insurance company to understand what's covered.
- We recommend having an extra 30-day supply of essential medications on hand. Don't forget over-the-counter medications like cough suppressants and fever reducing drugs like acetaminophen.

4. Create a Plan to Stay Connected

- Isolation is a huge issue as we begin to follow the social distancing guidance from the CDC. Set up communication using a variety of technology with your loved one and your team – FaceTime, Google Home, Skype, smart speakers, or simply phone and text.
- Check with the facility your loved one is in to see if they have made accommodations for online visits using technology and how they plan to communicate with families.
- As an alternative, send in cards, letters, magazines, puzzles or other items you know your loved one would be happy to get! Talk with your facility management about the safest way to deliver items.

5. Maintain Personal Safety and Self-Care

- In order to be safe and stay healthy, limit contact with visitors, stay home and continue to follow guidelines from the CDC. While most of us are very focused on the person we are caring for, it is essential to also care for yourself.
- For high risk individuals, such as those with dementia and underlying health conditions, consider having the primary caregiver self-isolate with the care recipient.
- Make sure to have a back-up plan should you get ill as the primary caregiver.



RESOURCES

Find local caregiving resources at:

www.aarp.org/crf
www.eldercare.acl.gov
or call 211

for more local resources

Visit AARP's Caregiving during Coronavirus resources at:

www.aarp.org/coronavirus

AARP's Prepare to Care guide is free and available to all:

www.aarp.org/preparetocare