

Asking for and Accepting Help

When people have asked if they can be of help to you, how often have you replied, "Thank you, but I'm fine." Many caregivers don't know how to marshal the goodwill of others and are reluctant to ask for help. You may not wish to "burden" others or admit that you can't handle everything yourself.

Be prepared with a mental list of ways that others could help you. For example, someone could take the person you care for on a 15-minute walk a couple of times a week. Your neighbor could pick up a few things for you at the grocery store. A relative could fill out some insurance papers. When you break down the jobs into very simple tasks, it is easier for people to help. And they do want to help. It is up to you to tell them how.

Help can come from community resources, family, friends and professionals. Ask them. Don't wait until you are overwhelmed and exhausted or your health fails. Reaching out for help when you need it is a sign of personal strength.

In addition to taking on the household chores, shopping, transportation, and personal care, 37 percent of caregivers also administer medications, injections, and medical treatment to the person for whom they care. Some 77 percent of those caregivers report the need to ask for advice about the medications and medical treatments. The person they usually turn to is their physician.

But while caregivers will discuss their loved one's care with the physician, caregivers seldom talk about their own health, which is equally important.