



# Caring for Aging Adults

## Did You Know?

Older adults will often respond better to changes when they feel that their preferences and wishes are honored. Help your aging family member or friend retain his or her dignity by allowing them to make as many decisions as possible:

- What to eat and when
- What to drink
- What diet to follow
- What to wear
- Which medical care they want
- How to spend their day
- Who to spend their time with

No matter how “good for them” any decision might be, it will likely go over much better if they agree to it. Involve them in decision making, and try to make small changes instead of drastic ones.



Caring for an aging family member or friend can be a great experience, but it can also come with a lot of worries, hard work, and stress. Make the process go as smoothly as possible by taking care of potential issues before they happen.

## Optimizing Nutrition and Safety

### Plan ahead

- Investigate services in your area so you know what is available. Assist with the application or enrollment process, as needed.

### Reduce risks

- Label chemicals and medications clearly, or lock up if needed.
- Watch for food safety issues. Is there expired food in the fridge? Can your parent reheat food or safely prepare raw meat?
- Remove or disable cooking equipment that poses safety risks.
- Consider a medical-alert bracelet.

### Monitor nutrition and hydration

- Watch for weight loss and *dehydration*.
- Make a grocery list with your parent, and help with shopping.
- Keep an eye on their refrigerator. If food is piling up and going bad, they could be forgetting to eat, or avoiding food preparation.
- See a Registered Dietitian (RD), especially if your loved one has a health condition like heart disease or diabetes. Some older adults may benefit from careful diet management, while others may benefit from a more liberal approach. An RD can help determine the best plan for your loved one.

### Make sure you take care of yourself

It is important to accept that you cannot do everything, and that your physical and mental health is a priority too! Adult caregivers often have their own lives, families, and even health problems of their own. Giving yourself a break will make you a much happier, healthier, and less resentful caregiver, all of which will benefit your aging parent.

Look to family and friends for help, even if just for a few hours. There are also many services in the community that can help, such as adult day care, companion services, home health care, meal delivery services, or respite stays in a nursing facility.