

# 6 Ways To Reduce Stress Associated With Caregiving

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**SPRINGFIELD**— Nearly 33% of Illinois' population age 65 and older live alone; and 20% of residents report having difficulty with self-care such as running errands, visiting a doctor or grocery shopping, according to the Illinois Department of Health Services.

Informal caregivers – those who are unpaid – assist others with daily living activities such as getting groceries, travel to medical appointments and cooking. Typically, these caregivers are a spouse, partner, family member, friend or neighbor.

As part of November's National Family Caregivers Month, HSHS Home Care Illinois is providing tips for caregivers, who often face their own health problems and are under severe emotional stress and physical strain. According to the [Family Caregiver Alliance](#), 17% say their overall health and well-being has gotten worse as a result of their caregiving responsibilities.

Amy Frederking, director of post-acute care for HSHS Illinois, says caregiving can be overwhelming at times. "It's important to remember that taking good care of someone else only happens if self-care is a priority."

Here are six ways to reduce the stress of caregiving:

1. **Learn about the family member's diagnosis.** Knowledge about the medical condition helps caregivers understand the disease and plan realistically.
2. **Discuss finances and health care wishes.** Although these conversations can be difficult, they help to better prepare for the future and relieve anxiety.
3. **Invite family and close friends to discuss the care needed with and for their loved one.** This meeting gives caregivers a change to say what they need, plan for care and ask others for help; do not be afraid to accept help.
4. **Set realistic goals.** Break large tasks into smaller steps that you can do one at a time. Begin to say 'no' to requests that are draining. Remember, you are doing the best you can and making the best decisions you can at any given time.
5. **Take advantage of community resources.** Meals on Wheels, adult day programs and respite programs can help relieve the workload and offer needed breaks. Look for caregiver educational programs that will increase skills and knowledge while offering support.
6. **Find support.** This may be the most important thing a caregiver can do as they take on more responsibility. Support groups can be helpful in connecting with others who are experiencing the same circumstances.

For more information about programs and services available for older adults, visit the Illinois Department on Aging at [ilaging.illinois.gov](http://ilaging.illinois.gov).