



**American
Red Cross**

FAMILY CAREGIVING

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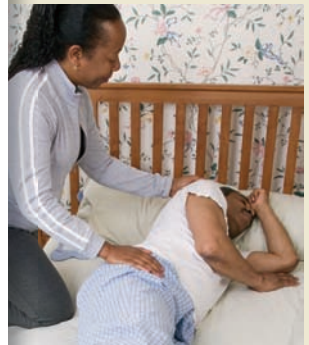
Safety Series Vol. 1

- Home Safety
- Caregiving Skills
- Legal and Financial Issues
- Dementia



Caring For A Loved One at Home Isn't Easy

*That's Why There's Family Caregiving
from the American Red Cross*



Family Caregiving Reference Guide and DVD helps individuals provide care for a parent, spouse or other loved one. The guide is tabbed for quick reference and includes a detachable Emergency Contact Card. Topics include:

- Home Safety
- Caregiving Skills
- Body Mechanics
- Personal Care
- Healthy Eating
- Caring for the Caregiver
- Legal and Financial Issues
- Dementia
- Caregiving Resources

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**American
Red Cross**

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the millions of family caregivers who respond with love and compassion when a loved one needs their help.

Note to Our Readers

This book is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care, legal or financial advice. You should seek such advice from medical, legal and financial professionals.

This book is not a substitute for materials used in American Red Cross courses in which First Aid or CPR certification is given. Family caregivers care for both men and women. Rather than say "he or she" and "him or her" each time, we alternate the gender reference throughout the text.

When you see the DVD icon (©) in the book margins, it means the skill is demonstrated or the topic is covered in greater detail on the "Family Caregiving" DVD.

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1

Home Safety

“I remember the day Mom was released from the hospital,” recalls Gwen. “Besides her mobility problems, the stroke left Mom a little confused and with impaired vision – especially on her left side. Before she came to live with us we had to do a room-to-room safety sweep. We removed clutter and throw rugs, rearranged furniture and installed grab bars in the shower. We told the children they would have to be very diligent about picking up their things so Grandma wouldn’t trip. The kids even took turns scooting around the house in her wheelchair to see if there were any obstacles we overlooked.”

tips

Reduce Hazards in Your Home

Remove clutter and obstacles:

- Remove tripping hazards such as electrical cords, papers, books and shoes from floors and stairs.
- Make sure there is a clear path around furniture.

Stairs and hallways:

- Keep stairs and hallways well lit and clutter-free.
- Install sturdy, well-secured handrails on both sides of stairs and hallways.
- Make sure your loved one wears slippers or shoes with nonskid soles when using stairs. Socks or smooth-soled slippers or shoes may cause her to slip and fall.

Provide a Safe Environment

Provide a Safe Environment

To help an elderly loved one maintain her independence, make the home environment as safe as possible. Use common sense and your knowledge of your loved one to anticipate things that could go wrong, then take steps to prevent them.

Inspect each room for potential safety hazards. If your loved one is wheelchair-bound, get down on her level. If you notice a safety threat, correct it right away if possible.

Prevent Falls

Falls are a leading cause of injuries, hospitalizations and deaths among the elderly. The majority of falls happen in the home. If your loved one is weak, confused or unsteady on her feet, she is more likely to fall or injure herself. Help prevent falls by following these guidelines:

- Attend to health issues that increase your loved one's risk of falls.

- Maintain a regular exercise program. Exercise improves strength, balance and coordination.
- Have the health-care provider review your loved one's medicines (both prescription and over-the-counter) to reduce side effects and avoid drug interactions.
- Have your loved one's vision checked annually. Poor vision

can increase the risk of falling. If your loved one wears eyeglasses, make sure they are clean.

- To prevent your loved one from falling out of bed, use guardrails and position her in the middle of the bed so she can turn over safely.

Electrical Safety

Extension cords are not intended for long-term use.



Remove throw rugs, which can slip, or secure them with double-sided tape or rubber nonskid matting.

tips

Reduce Hazards in Your Home

Focus on flooring:

- Remove throw rugs, which can slip, or secure them with double-sided tape or rubber nonskid matting.
- Tack down edges of carpets and repair, replace or remove carpeting that is worn, torn or frayed.
- Keep floors dry. Wipe up spills immediately, and follow infection control procedures when necessary.
(See [Body Fluid Cleanup on page 12](#))
- Use nonwax cleaning products on floors.

If an extension cord is needed for longer than 1 day, have an additional electrical outlet installed.

Do not tuck an extension cord under a rug. Secure it to the wall or floor with tape or commercial products made to hide the cords. Never leave extension cords lying loosely on the floor or hanging across a pathway.

Do not overload extension cords or electrical circuits. Unplug electrical equipment when not in use and replace frayed cords.

Telephone Access

Make sure your loved one can call for help in an emergency. Place at least one telephone where it can be reached in case your loved one is unable to stand and move around.

If your loved one wears a hearing aid, make sure it works and encourage her to use it.

Post emergency phone numbers near each phone in the house. Be sure to include



Contract with a medical alert service, such as LifeLine,[®] so your loved one can summon help if she can't get to a telephone.

the National Poison Control number: 800-222-1222. Post your phone number on each telephone in the house. Also, post the street names of the nearest intersection near each phone.

Have a cell phone available for emergency use, if possible.

Equipment Safety

Caring for a loved one at home can involve unfamiliar equipment, such as a wheelchair, walker or hospital bed. Before using any piece of equipment, take the time to understand how it works by reading the product manual and following instructions exactly. Improper use can cause serious injuries. (If no manual is available, you may find instructions on a sticker or label attached to the equipment.) You may also ask the health-care provider, a home health nurse or equipment retailer to teach you how to use the equipment.

Before using the equipment with your loved one, practice the correct procedure by yourself.

Use Brakes. The brakes provided on wheeled equipment — beds, wheelchairs, shower chairs — prevent unwanted rolling. Test the brakes before using a piece of

Fire Safety

wheeled equipment. Make sure they work properly. If they do not, do not use the equipment.

Before helping your loved one into or out of a wheelchair, lock the brakes and make sure the chair is secure. Also, before stepping away from someone in a wheelchair, make sure both wheelchair brakes are locked securely.

Fire Safety

Do not let your loved one smoke unsupervised. Keep candles away from combustible materials and do not leave your loved one unattended in a room with lit candles.

Do not overload electrical outlets or use appliances with frayed or cracked wires.

Label shut-off valves for



Test the brakes before using a piece of wheeled equipment. Make sure they work properly.

gas, oil, water and electricity.

Schedule Routine Inspections

Inspect fireplaces, fuel-burning heaters and woodstoves. Have chimney connections and flues inspected by a professional and cleaned, if necessary, before every heating season.

Make sure they are properly vented to the outside to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

Alarms and Fire Extinguishers

Test your smoke and fire detectors every month to make sure they work properly.

Have one or more working fire extinguishers in your home and know how to use them properly.

Change the batteries and examine your fire extinguisher and detectors twice a year when you change the clocks.

tips

Reduce Hazards in Your Home

Reduce bathroom hazards:

- Make sure tubs and showers have a textured surface or nonskid mats or strips both inside and on the floor outside.
- Install grab bars in the tub, shower and by the toilet for support.
- Use a shower chair and a handheld showerhead to make bathing safer and easier.
- Check the water temperature with a bath thermometer or the back of your hand before your loved one enters the tub or shower. Turn hot water on last and off first. Set the hot water heater to low or no higher than 108° F.

tips

Reduce Hazards in Your Home

Improve lighting visibility:

- Make sure your home is well lit (use at least 60-watt bulbs; frosted light-bulbs reduce glare).
- Install nightlights in your loved one's bedroom, bathroom and hallway and at the top and bottom of stairways.
- Use reflective tape at the top and bottom of stairs.

Portable Space Heaters

Place space heaters at least 3 feet away from pets, people and anything combustible.

Never leave space heaters on when you are not in the room or when you go to bed.

If you have a fuel-burning space heater and people in the room begin to have nausea, vomiting, a headache or begin to feel sick, turn off the heater and get fresh air immediately.

Cooking Safety

When cooking, do not wear loose-fitting clothing or clothing with dangling sleeves. Always turn pot handles inward.

Oxygen Safety

If your loved one's health-care provider recommends extra oxygen to help her breathe, ask the health-care provider for the correct oxygen flow rate and when to change it. Your loved one's health-care provider will tell you if and when to adjust

the flow rate.

If your loved one uses supplemental oxygen, take precautions to make sure it is safe. Keep oxygen away from open flames or high heat. This includes cigarette smoke, radiators or space heaters and some electrical appliances, particularly electric shavers.

Keep all flammable items such as aerosol sprays, alco-

hol, gasoline, perfume and wool clothing away from the oxygen supply.

Keep oxygen tanks in a stable position to prevent them from falling over.

Have a backup oxygen supply plan in case the tank runs empty after business hours or during weekends and holidays. If your loved one uses an elec-



When cooking, do not wear loose-fitting clothing or clothing with dangling sleeves and always turn pot handles inward.

Infection Control



Follow the oxygen supplier's instructions for safe storage and equipment use.

tric oxygen machine, learn how to administer oxygen manually in case the electricity goes out.

Infection Control

Your loved one may be vulnerable to infection. Protect yourself and your loved one by treating all blood and body

fluids as if they are infectious and wash hands often to remove bacteria and viruses that can cause disease. Also, use a disinfectant cleaner on household surfaces.

Washing Hands

To wash your hands correctly:

1. Wet hands with warm, running water.
2. Apply liquid soap to hands.
3. Rub hands vigorously for at least 15 seconds, covering all surfaces of the hands and fingers including fingernails and around jewelry. Scrub nails by rubbing them against the palms of your hands.
4. Rinse hands with water.
5. Dry hands thoroughly with a paper towel.
6. Use the paper towel to turn off the faucet.

If hands do not look dirty, you may use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer instead of, or in addition to, washing.

② Disposable Gloves

Another precaution is to wear disposable gloves when you perform these tasks:

- When in contact with your loved one's semen, vaginal fluid, cuts, sores, blood or other body fluids such as urine, feces or vomit.
- When providing care to your loved one's mouth, rectum or genitals.
- When changing diapers or sanitary pads or to empty bedpans or urinals.
- If you have cuts, sores, rashes or breaks in your own skin, cover them with a bandage and wear disposable gloves.

You can purchase disposable gloves at most drugstores. Use the gloves only once, then throw them away. Do not use gloves more than one time even if they are marked "reusable."

In some cases insurance companies and Medicaid will



Wash hands with liquid soap and warm running water.

pay for disposable gloves if the health-care provider writes a prescription for them.

Disposable gloves are available in latex, vinyl or nitrile. Some people are sensitive to latex and may have an allergic reaction to it. Symptoms include skin redness, rash, hives, itching, runny nose, sneezing, itchy eyes, scratchy throat or shortness of breath.

If you experience any of these symptoms, remove gloves and wash your hands

immediately. If conditions persist or if you experience a severe reaction, get medical attention right away.

Body Fluid Cleanup

Because viruses and bacteria can be found in semen, vaginal fluid, feces, breast milk or blood, clean up these spills quickly.



Touch only the interior surfaces when removing disposable gloves

Put on gloves, wipe up the fluid with paper towels or rags, put the used paper towels or rags in plastic bags to dispose of later, then wipe the area clean with a fresh mixture of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup bleach per gallon of water. Allow the solution to stand on the surface for at least 10 minutes or allow the surface to air dry.

If you get body fluid in your eyes, nose, mouth, or a cut or open wound, immediately flush the affected area with water, call the health-care provider, explain what happened and ask what else you should do.

In some cases, appropriate barriers such as dust/particulate mask and/or eye shields may be necessary. Consult your health-care provider for guidance on appropriate personal protective equipment or special hand-washing and cleanup procedures for your situation.

Needles and Syringes

Your loved one may need needles and syringes to take medicine. If you handle these, be careful not to stick yourself.

Use a needle and syringe only once and do not put caps back on needles. Most needle-stick injuries occur when recapping is attempted. Do not take needles off syringes, or bend or break needles.

If a needle falls off a syringe, use tweezers or pliers to pick it up – do not use your fingers.

Touch needles and syringes only by the barrel of the syringe and always hold the sharp end away from you.

Put the used needle and syringe in a puncture-proof container, such as a coffee can or glass bottle. You can also get a special container from the health-care provider or nurse. Keep containers in the rooms where needles and syringes are used.



Put used needles and syringes in a puncture-proof container.

Ask the health-care provider or nurse how to get rid of the container with used needles and syringes.

If you get stuck with a used needle:

- Put the needle in the used-needle container.

Medication Safety

- Wash the stuck area with warm, soapy water, and use a circular scrubbing motion.
- Call your health-care provider or the emergency room, explain what happened and ask what else you should do. You may be advised to take medicine for post-exposure treatment.

Dispose of Waste Safely

Always wear disposable gloves and flush down the toilet all liquid waste such as urine and vomit as well as toilet paper and tissues with blood, semen, vaginal fluid or breast milk. Be careful to not splash when you pour liquids into the toilet.

Place paper towels, sanitary pads, diapers, bandages and other items that cannot be flushed in a closed and sealed plastic bag. Ask the health-care provider, nurse or local health department how to get rid of items with body fluids on them.

Medication Safety



It is important to keep a comprehensive list of your loved one's medications (including dose and frequency of prescriptions, over-the-counter medications and herbal supplements). (See insert on page 124.) Copy this list and post a copy on the refrigerator, near telephones, and have your loved one keep a copy in her purse or wallet.

Bring the list with you when taking your loved one to the doctor, pharmacist, hospital or other health-care provider. Doing so will help professional caregivers ensure that she receives appropriate medical care.

Store all medicines and cleaning materials in locked cabinets and closets.

Emergency Preparedness

It is more important than ever that you be prepared for possible disasters and other emergencies. Natural or

human-caused disasters can strike suddenly, at anytime and anywhere. There are **three actions** everyone can take that can help make a difference...



1. Get a Kit

What you have on hand when a disaster happens can make a big difference. Have at least 3 days of supplies in an easy-to-carry evacuation kit, with additional supplies at home in case you cannot leave.

Remember to check your kit and replace the stock every 6 months.

An easy way to get your kit started is to contact your local Red Cross chapter or go online at www.redcross.org to order your emergency preparedness kit today. If you purchase a

kit or choose to build your own, check that it includes the following:

Water. Include at least one gallon per person per day.

Food. Include non-perishable foods you enjoy that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking and little or no water. This may include high-protein items, including energy bars, ready-to-eat soup, peanut butter, etc.

Flashlight. Include extra batteries, or use an alternate energy option.

First aid kit. Include a first aid reference guide.

Medications. Remember to include prescription and non-prescription medications, and copies of the prescriptions.

Radio. Include batteries or use an alternate energy option.

Tools. Include a wrench, a manual can opener, screwdriver, hammer, pliers, knife, duct tape, plastic sheeting and garbage bags.

Clothing. Have a change of clothes for everyone, including sturdy shoes and work gloves.

Personal items. Eyeglasses or contact lenses and solution; unique items for infants, seniors and people with disabilities.

Copies of important papers. Include identification cards, insurance policies, birth certificates, passports, etc.

Comfort items. Include some toys and books.

Sanitary supplies. Toilet paper, towelettes, feminine supplies, personal hygiene items, bleach, etc.

Money. Cash and coins in case credit cards do not work.

Contact list. Include family phone numbers, e-mail addresses, meeting locations and out-of-



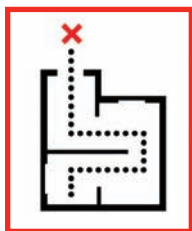
It's important to have a well-stocked first aid kit.

area contact information.

Pet supplies. Food, water, leash, litter box or plastic bags, tags, medications and vaccination information.

Map. Mark this with evacuation routes from your local area.

Store your disaster supplies in sturdy yet easy-to-carry containers. Keep a smaller version of the kit in your vehicle. If you become stranded, or are not able to return home, having some items with you may keep you more comfortable until help arrives.



2. Make a Plan

Planning ahead is the first step to a more calm and assured disaster response.

Talk. Discuss with your family

the disasters that can happen where you live. Establish responsibilities for each member of your household and plan to work together as a team. Designate alternates in case someone is absent. If a family member is in the military, also plan for how you would respond if they are deployed and include the local military base resources that may be available.

Plan. Choose two places to meet after a disaster:

- Right outside your home, in case of a sudden emergency, such as a fire.
- Outside your neighborhood, in case you cannot return home or are asked to evacuate your neighborhood.

Learn. Each adult in your household should learn how and when to turn off utilities such as electricity, water and gas. Ask someone at your local fire department to show you how to use a fire extinguisher.

Tell. Everyone in the house-

hold should know where emergency information and supplies are kept. Make copies for everyone to carry with them. Keep the information updated.

Practice. Evacuate your home twice a year. Drive your planned evacuation route and plot alternate routes on a map in case main roads are impassable or gridlocked.

Include your pets. If you must evacuate, take your animals with you. If it is not safe for you, it is not safe for them.

Support your community. Some caregivers feel that they get a welcome break by taking a little time to help others in their communities. Support your community by volunteering and by giving blood.

More than one million Americans serve their communities as volunteers. Red Cross volunteers help people in emergencies; they teach first aid classes; organize blood drives; and translate so that

non-English speakers can receive Red Cross services. They connect members of the armed forces stationed overseas with their families.

Blood is needed in times of emergency, but the ongoing need is also great. Every two seconds someone needs a blood transfusion — cancer patients, accident victims, premature infants, people with chronic diseases.

Giving blood doesn't take much time. During times of crisis and every day, each blood donation has the power to help save as many as 3 lives.



3. Be Informed

Knowing what may happen and how you can help can make all the difference when an emergency happens.

Learn what disasters or emergencies may occur

where you live, work and play. These events can vary from impacting only you and your family – such as a home fire or medical emergency – or your entire community – such as an earthquake or flood.

Find out how local authorities will notify you during a disaster


and how you will get important information, including local radio, TV and NOAA weather radio.

Learn what you can do to prepare for these events by contacting your local Red Cross chapter to ask about first aid and CPR, and disaster training.

Learning simple first aid techniques can give you the



Make sure that at least one member of your household is trained in first aid and CPR.



skills and confidence to help anyone in your home, your neighborhood and at work.

When a major disaster occurs, your community can change in an instant. Loved ones can be hurt and emergency response can be delayed. Make sure that at least one member of your household is trained in first aid and CPR and in how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED).

Disaster preparedness presentations will provide more specific information on how to prepare for disasters in your community. Contact your local

American Red Cross chapter for details.

The 3 steps below can help you to react well in an emergency:

- **Check the scene** for safety and the person for life-threatening conditions.
- **Call 9-1-1** or your local emergency number and request professional assistance.
- **Care for the person** if you can reach him safely.

Share what you have learned with your family, household and neighbors and encourage them to be informed too.

2

Caregiving Skills

“ I called the doctor whenever Jack’s breathing suddenly became more labored than usual,” says Donna, as she recalls caregiving for Jack, her late husband. “The doctor always asked me about Jack’s body temperature, pulse, respiration rate and what he had eaten and when. After Jack’s diagnosis with cancer, the doctor said I should call him right away if Jack was fighting off an infection or had indigestion or food poisoning.”

tips

Keep A Vital Signs Notebook

A health-care provider may suggest keeping a record of your loved one's vital signs to help him or her monitor your loved one's health.

Take vital signs at about the same time each day and evening. Record the date, time, temperature, pulse, respiration and blood pressure.

Vital sign readings may show physical changes that occur when the body is fighting an infection or disease. Some of the first changes may be a rise in body temperature and a faster heart-beat and breathing rate.

Vital Signs

① Reading and Recording Vital Signs

Chances are you and your health-care provider won't be able to tell how your loved one's body is functioning by only his appearance, although that will give you clues. You have to read the signs – the vital signs: pulse, breathing rate, blood pressure and temperature – to know how the body is working.

Your loved one's health-care provider may recommend that you or a home health aide measure your loved one's vital signs when his condition changes. This will also help the health-care provider decide what treatment or medication your loved one should receive.



What Vital Signs Measure

Body temperature is the amount of heat in the body.

Breathing rate is how fast air moves in and out of the lungs per minute. One respiration is one inhalation plus one exhalation.

Pulse is how fast the heart is beating.

Blood pressure is the force exerted against the blood vessels (arteries) when the heart pumps blood.



Sudden Illness

🕒 Sudden Illness

When a person becomes suddenly ill, he or she usually looks and feels sick. **CALL 9-1-1** or your local emergency number if your loved one has any of the following signals:

- Changes in consciousness (such as feeling lightheaded, dizzy or becoming unconscious)
- Nausea or vomiting
- Difficulty speaking or slurred speech
- Numbness or weakness
- Loss of vision, or blurred vision
- Changes in breathing (The person may have trouble breathing or may not be breathing normally.)
- Changes in skin color (pale, ashen or flushed skin)
- Sweating
- Persistent pressure or pain
- Diarrhea
- Seizures
- Paralysis or inability to move
- Severe headache



One of the primary signals of a stroke is sudden facial drooping or weakness on one side of the face.

In many cases, receiving prompt care can ensure a positive outcome to the medical emergency.

Stroke: What to Look For

As with other sudden illnesses, the primary signals are a sudden change in how the

body is working or feeling:

- Sudden body weakness or numbness, often on one side of the body
- Sudden facial drooping or weakness on one side of the face
- Trouble speaking or being understood when speaking
- Has blurred or dimmed vision
- Sudden severe headache
- Dizziness or confusion

If you notice your loved one is having or has had a stroke:

- Send someone to **CALL 9-1-1** or the local emergency number immediately.
- If the person is drooling or having difficulty swallowing, place him on his side to keep the airway clear.

The F.A.S.T. mnemonic in the sidebar on the right is based on the Cincinnati Pre-Hospital Stroke Scale to help identify if a person has experienced a stroke.

For a Stroke, Think F.A.S.T.

FACE – Weakness on one side of the face

Ask the person to smile; this will show if there is drooping or weakness in the muscles on one side of the face.

ARM – Weakness or numbness in one arm

Ask the person to raise both arms to find out if there is weakness in one limb (both arms will not be raised to same level).

SPEECH – Slurred speech or trouble getting the words out

Ask the person to say a simple sentence or phrase and listen for slurred or distorted speech (e.g. “Mary had a little lamb”).

TIME – Time to **CALL 9-1-1** if you see any of these signs

If the person has difficulty with any of these tasks, or shows other signals of a stroke, note the time that the signals began and

CALL 9-1-1 right away.

Giving Medication

Giving Medication

Your loved one may be taking prescription medicine as well as over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and food supplements. OTC medicine can include vitamins, laxatives, cold medicines, herbal remedies and antacids.

Both prescription and OTC medicine can cause serious problems if not taken correctly. Be very careful to give medications exactly the way the health-care provider advises.

To be safe, don't change medication dosage without first checking with the health-care provider.

You and your loved one should learn about the medicines he takes and know when to take them and their possible side effects.

Some questions to ask

- What is the medicine's name?
- Why is my loved one taking this medicine?
- Should my loved one take this medicine on an empty stomach or with food?
- If I forget to give my loved one a dose of the medicine, what should I do?
- How much should I give him?
- How long should he take it?
- What problems should I watch for?



Be careful to give medications exactly the way the health-care provider advises.

Do's and Don'ts of Medicine

DO let your health-care provider know if you think the medicine is working.

DO always tell the health-care provider about past problems your loved one has had with drugs, such as rashes, indigestion or dizziness.

DO call the health-care provider right away if your loved one has any problems with the medicine.

DO make sure that the health-care provider knows all of the medicines that your loved one is taking before he advises you to either stop a medicine or start a new one.

DO store oral medications separate from other medications – such as lotions, eye-drops and suppositories.

DON'T mix alcohol and medicine unless the health-care provider says it is OK. Some drugs may not work well or may make your loved one sick if taken with alcohol.

DON'T crush or chew tablets or pills unless the health-care provider or pharmacist says it is OK.

DON'T have your loved one “make up” a dose if he misses one unless advised to do so by the health-care provider.

DON'T give your loved one medicine prescribed for another person.

DON'T give any medicine to your loved one without the health-care provider's approval.

Your Pharmacy Can Help

Pharmacists are a great resource for medication questions. Try to use the same pharmacy for all prescriptions and OTC medicines. That way, the pharmacist will be able to advise you about potential medication interactions. Ask the pharmacist to add OTC medications, herbal remedies and any mail order prescriptions to the file.

Keep Medication Records

As a caregiver, you may be faced with a complicated medication schedule. Because it is so important that correct medicine be taken at the correct times, it helps to keep records of all medicine being taken. If your loved one becomes seriously ill, keeping records becomes even more important.



This kind of container can help you remember to give each dose.

Remember these 5 RIGHTS to giving medication

Right Person: Give medication only to the person for whom it is prescribed.

Right Time: Give the medication at the time of day and frequency the doctor prescribed.

Right Medication: The person in your care may have to take several medications a day. Read the label to ensure that you are giving the correct one.

Right Amount: Give only the prescribed amount.

Right Route: Medications come in many forms; some may be for oral use, others are to be used only in the nose or on the skin. Note how the medication is to be given.

Keep a medications list for your loved one that includes the names of the medication, prescription number, who prescribed it and why, amount and when taken and special directions for its use or precautions to follow. Take this list with you when you go to the health-care provider.

You may also find that daily or weekly medicine containers (available at most drugstores) help you and your loved one remember to take each dose.

Read the Label

Read the label before giving any medication. If the label is hard to read, ask your pharmacist to use larger type or keep a bright light and a magnifying glass handy for reading labels. The label should show:

- **List of Ingredients.** If you know your loved one is allergic to anything in the medicine, don't use it. Ask the health-care provider or pharmacist for a different medicine.

- **Warnings.** Read these carefully.
- **The Expiration Date.** Do not use a medicine after the expiration date on the container.
- **Side Effects.** Some medicines can cause problems, or side effects. Side effects may include sleepiness, vomiting, bleeding, headaches or rashes. Ask about the side effects of the medicine your loved one is taking. Talk

about them with the health-care provider, pharmacist or nurse.

Avoid Problems

Organize your loved one's medicine. Your loved one should not "make up" a dose if he misses one unless advised to do so by the health-care provider. Do not share medicines, and keep a list of the medicines your loved one takes.



Make sure you understand the information your loved one's health-care provider or home health nurse gives you.

Communication and Organization

Although it may sometimes feel like it, you are not alone in providing care for your loved one. His health-care professionals are there to help. Think of them as part of your caregiving team and do not hesitate to call them and ask questions.

It is important that you communicate with your loved one's health-care professionals about his condition and the care you provide. Here are some tips:

- Make sure you understand the information your loved one's health-care provider or home health nurse gives you. Ask a lot of questions and keep asking until you get the answers you need.
- Have a list of questions ready and write down the answers. Do not trust this to your memory alone.
- Keep your loved one's medical information in front of you when talking with his

health-care provider or home health nurse.

Time-Saving Ideas

These helpful tips will help you get more done in a day, but don't pressure yourself to do too much for your loved one. Plan to take time for yourself too.

Organize Supplies

Organize the supplies you need for your loved one's morning and bedtime routines (e.g., medication, personal items, clothing), and keep them well stocked and in your loved one's room for easy access.

Get Help

If your loved one needs a lot of assistance (morning and bedtime routines will usually take the most time), ask a friend, family member or home health aide for help.

Do not try to do everything by yourself and don't wait for someone else to offer to help

Time-Saving Ideas



If your loved one needs a lot of assistance, ask a friend, family member or home health aide for help.

— ask! For example, if you are caring for your mother, ask a sibling to sit with her each Saturday morning for 2 hours while you take a break.

Simplify the Laundry

Instead of ironing your loved one's clothes, try putting them

in a dryer with a wet towel. You'll be amazed at how few wrinkles there are.

Use a water-resistant mattress pad under regular sheets on your loved one's bed if she is incontinent. This will help protect the mattress. Also use a disposable bed protector under your loved one to keep the sheets cleaner longer.

Choose Easy Clothes

Loose-fitting pants with elastic or drawstring waistbands are easier to put on and take off.

Shirts that snap or zipper down the front are much easier to put on than button-down shirts or pullovers.

Shoes that have Velcro® fasteners or zippers are easier to put on and take off than shoes with laces.

Family Caregiving

You are not alone.

Here is what some experts in the caregiving community are saying about *Family Caregiving*:

“The American Red Cross has once again come to the aid of those in need – this time family caregivers. For those suddenly finding themselves in that role, The American Red Cross’s new book and DVD set, *Family Caregiving* is a great primer. This valuable reference tool is a supportive place to start gathering information and knowledge.”

Suzanne Mintz

President/Co-Founder

National Family Caregivers Association (www.thefamilycaregiver.org)

Author, *Love, Honor, & Value*

“The American Red Cross book and DVD set, *Family Caregiving*, is a valuable guide, full of practical advice on an impressive range of topics. It addresses the needs of both the caregiver as well as the care receiver. Thoughtfully, sensitively and clearly presented; I highly recommend it.”

Gene D. Cohen, M.D., Ph.D.

Director, Center on Aging, Health and Humanities

The George Washington University

Author, *The Mature Mind: The Positive Power of the Aging Brain*

“Family caregivers often say they don’t know where to turn for such basic information as lifting, transferring, personal hygiene and nutrition. Now they can turn to a trustworthy source. With its *Family Caregiving* book and DVD set, the American Red Cross is providing a valuable and much-needed service.”

Gail Hunt

President and CEO

National Alliance for Caregiving

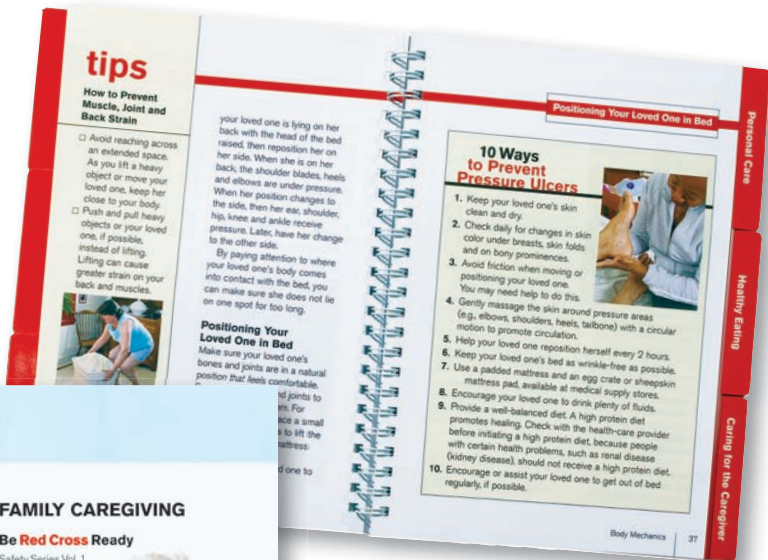
Look for upcoming books in the American Red Cross Safety Series on topics such as family first aid and preparedness and first aid for pets. Now it’s easier than ever to Be Red Cross Ready!



**American
Red Cross**

We hope you have enjoyed the first two chapters of the American Red Cross Family Caregiving Reference Guide.

Order the complete book and DVD at redcross.org/store!



Family Caregiving Reference Guide and DVD

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