



How Can Respite Care Assist Seniors and Families?

The older adult population has grown at an unprecedented rate in recent years. It shouldn't come as a surprise that the number of people caring for an aging loved one has also risen. According to a report from the National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) and AARP, 53 million Americans provide unpaid care for relatives and friends.

Unfortunately, the demands placed on a family caregiver can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and burnout. This is where professional respite care can serve as a lifeline to manage the demands of everyday life and reduce the risk of fatigue.

So, what is respite care?



Respite Care Definition

Respite care is short-term relief or backup for primary caregivers to enable them to run errands, socialize, travel, work, or unwind. Professional at-home assistance can be arranged for a couple of hours on the weekend, during a vacation, or during a one-time event with a few days' notice.

What is Caregiver Fatigue?

Caregiver fatigue, also known as "caregiver burnout," occurs when a caregiver feels physically, mentally, and emotionally overwhelmed and exhausted.

Symptoms may include:

- Inability to keep appointments or manage responsibilities
- Withdrawal from people and activities
- Difficulty sleeping
- Unhealthy coping behaviors, such as drug or alcohol use, overeating, or not eating enough
- Feeling irritable, stressed, exhausted, or isolated
- Resentment of duties for a loved one
- Lack of motivation

Fatigue is common and is most likely to occur when someone is also managing personal responsibilities themselves or lacks support from friends and family members.

How to Prevent Caregiver Fatigue

Make sure you pay attention to yourself so you can support others. Respite care can be cost-effective and beneficial for your health. Getting a break from the demands of your duties can reduce your stress by providing a window of time to address your physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and practical needs.

Do not feel guilty for taking a break. Asking for help will benefit your loved one and you.

How to Start Respite Care

The first step is to contact your local Visiting Angels home care office. A coordinator will schedule a free in-home consultation to answer your questions and discuss your loved one's requirements.

A Visiting Angels coordinator will conduct a home assessment and work with you to develop a care plan for your loved one's needs.

First Aid Kit Needs for Seniors at Home

Caring for a senior loved one requires preparation, including having an emergency medical file and a well-stocked first aid kit available for unexpected health challenges or urgent situations.

Your senior loved one, just like anyone else, may encounter minor injuries, sudden illnesses, or other health issues that require immediate attention. A properly stocked first aid kit in their home can help ensure you and other caregivers have access to the required supplies when needed.

First Aid Kit Essentials for Seniors

The first items you should stock in any first aid kit are the “essentials”—the items commonly needed for most minor health occurrences.

Supplies (in alphabetical order) include:

- Anti-Inflammatory Medication*
- Antiseptic Ointment and/or Wipes
- Antiseptic spray
- Band-Aids
- Blanket
- Calamine Lotion*
- Cold Compress
- Compact Flashlight
- Cotton Swabs
- Fever Reducer*
- Gauze
- Gloves
- Hand Sanitizer
- Hydrocortisone Cream*
- Hydrogen Peroxide*
- Scissors/Shears
- Tape
- Thermometer
- Tweezers

If you are missing—or low—on any supplies, restock them as soon as possible.

*Check with your senior’s doctor to ensure anti-inflammatories, calamine lotion, fever reducers, hydrogen peroxide, and hydrocortisone cream are safe to use before stocking these items in the first aid kit.

Additional Supplies and Documents

Depending on your loved one’s health, additional supplies or specialty home care items may be necessary. Talk with your senior and their doctor to determine if they require further items due to a chronic health condition or other needs.

Make sure essential information from your loved one’s emergency medical file is included in their home first aid kit.

This information includes:

- Phone numbers for doctors, pharmacy, and emergency contacts, as well as poison control
- A copy of a photo ID
- List of allergies, health conditions, and surgeries
- List of medications, including dosage and schedule for each
- Insurance information
- Medical forms (i.e., DNR, advance directives, power of attorney, living will)

Other First Aid Kit Tips for Seniors

After you’ve assessed and supplied your loved one’s home first aid kit, place it somewhere that is easy to access. Make sure the first aid kit can be easily found in an emergency, and alert anyone who visits the home regularly of its location.

Restock items promptly. Check each item every six months to determine if anything has expired, and replace it as needed.

Professional In-Home Care Can Help

While it’s essential to have a well-stocked first aid kit available, having a professional in-home caregiver by your loved one’s side can provide an additional layer of support and safety when you or other family members are unable to be there.

Contact your local Visiting Angels to schedule a free home care consultation with a care coordinator by calling **800.365.4189** for more information.

