

Also take advantage of benefits offered by your employer. Many companies include family care in their sick-leave policies, and you may be eligible for up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act. You might want to discuss your situation with your supervisor and human resources department.

Educate yourself. Unlike professional caregivers, family caregivers are typically thrown into a complex role with no training. Make sure you fully understand your loved one's condition, medications, and appropriate methods of care. Ensure that you are authorized to speak to the patient's physician(s). Don't hesitate to call with questions, and keep a running list of issues for the next office visit.

Take care of yourself. Caregiving can take a physical and mental toll on family caregivers, who are especially vulnerable to back conditions, exhaustion, depression, and loneliness. Take regular breaks to rest or enjoy a favorite activity. Ask for help from other family members and friends. Consider support groups. Don't be afraid to seek professional help for yourself.

More information on family caregiving is available from the Family Caregiver Alliance (caregiver.org), the Caregiver Action Network (caregiveraction.org), the National Institute on Aging (nia.nih.gov), and AARP Family Caregiving (aarp.org/caregiving).

1) AARP Public Policy Institute, 2019 (2017 data)

2) *Health Affairs*, June 2019 (2013 data)

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