



For the Lifespan: The Caregiver Guide

Module 1

Providing Personal Care

Participant Guide

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PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION



The importance of providing personal care for your family members, friends, or care recipients cannot be overstated. Although it may sometimes be challenging, the caregiving you provide affects the overall health, independence, and well-being of the person you care for. You provide peace of mind, comfort, and security.

Caregiving is also beneficial for you, as it may deepen your connections, improve relationships, heighten your appreciation of life, bring out hidden strengths, and provide a sense of accomplishment.

The purpose of this module is to provide information and resources about personal care, including general principles of providing care, developing a care plan, assisting with hygiene, preventing pressure sores, exercising, and using good body mechanics.

The overall goal of this, and the other UCare modules, is to connect you with the information and resources that will reduce your stress and enhance your caregiving role. We will share and discuss ways to carry out your duties that are hopefully easier, healthier, and safer for both you and the person you care for.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

After completing this module, you will be able to:

1. Understand general guidelines of providing care.
2. Understand how journaling may help.

3. Learn tips to make bathing, dressing, and grooming easier.
4. Recognize how to prevent pressure ulcers.
5. Recognize the importance of exercise.
6. Learn some body mechanics for the caregiver.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PROVIDING CARE

The following general guidelines for providing care form a foundation of overarching principles to keep in mind.

Take Care of Yourself – It's easy to neglect your own needs, but you need to stay physically and emotionally strong in order to provide the best care and maintain your own health. Taking good care of yourself includes staying positive, getting enough rest, eating healthy meals, exercising frequently, sharing your feelings, keeping your sense of humor, and taking the time to relax and do some things you enjoy when you can.



Ask For and Accept Help – Don't try to do everything yourself or more than you are realistically able. Often one family member is the primary caregiver. Ask family members, neighbors, friends, church members, and other groups for help. Accept their offers of assistance. You can also consider hiring help. Develop contingency plans.



Cope with Stress – There is no question that caregiving is often stressful. There are many tasks to perform, often with limited time and resources. Try to give yourself credit for doing the best you can and not feel guilty that you aren't doing more. If you start to feel overwhelmed, look at the big picture and consider whether the issue will matter in a year. Take one day at a time, or even one hour at a time. Take frequent breaks. Don't demand perfection from yourself or the person you care for. Let go of any anger or resentment. Connect with others and find someone to share your feelings with.



Try to stay positive and think about the things that you are grateful for and appreciate in your life. Exercise regularly, get enough sleep, laugh, relax when you can, and always believe in yourself.

Websites with good information about coping strategies include:

www.utahparentcenter.org/resources/caregivers

http://www.alz.org/national/documents/brochure_caregiverstress.pdf

http://www.aarp.org/home-family/caregiving/?cmp=RDRCTCRGVGRECNT_JUN22_012

<http://www.ndsu.edu/ndsu/aging/caregiver/resources/aging.html>

<http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/caregiver-advice-cope>

www.aging.slco.org/caregiverSupport/top10concerns.html#9

www.caregiving.org



Time Management – It will benefit you to think about how to best schedule your limited time, organize and bundle tasks, and the optimum period to perform tasks. Drop any tasks that aren't necessary. Learn to say “no” when asked to complete additional assignments. Ask other people to help with some of your tasks or to run errands for you.



Maintain Dignity – Showing respect to the person you care for will help them maintain their dignity. It may be difficult for an independent person to receive care. Remember to frequently point out their strengths and positive attributes to help them feel appreciated and maintain their self-esteem.



Communicate Effectively – It may be challenging to communicate with the person you care for if they are hard of

hearing, unable to speak, or have cognitive disabilities. Even so, it is important to communicate what you are doing to help your care recipient understand and be more involved. Listening to concerns and feelings will help them feel more appreciated and valued.



Honor Preferences and Provide Choices – Provide choices for daily activities when possible, and follow your care recipient’s preferences as much as you realistically can. Encourage the person you care for to perform the tasks they can to enhance their independence.



Keep the Environment Safe – Assess the home of your care recipient for safety hazards and address any potential problems to minimize or eliminate potential accidents. The assessment should include the entrances, plumbing, electrical system, kitchen, bedrooms, bathrooms, flooring, garage/driveway, structural integrity, animal care and control, pests, sanitation level, accessibility, and excessive clutter/hoarding. See UCare Module 9, Keeping Your Home and the Person You Care for Safe, for more information.

ASSESS CARE ABILITIES AND NEEDS



An assessment or evaluation of your care recipient’s abilities will help you better determine what their needs are, and estimate how much time, money, and resources it will take to fulfill those needs. This assessment should include all daily functions, including bathing, dressing, exercising, hygiene, eating, walking, toileting, mobility, transferring, housework, meal prep, medication, laundry, transportation, grocery shopping, handling the mail, and yard care. This assessment can be done in conjunction with developing a care plan in the next section. There are checklist forms for assessing

needs on the following Utah Coalition for Caregiver Support website: www.caregivers.utah.gov/assess_needs.htm

DEVELOP A CARE PLAN



Developing a logical care plan will help you determine the best way to complete tasks and how much time and resources you'll need. Being organized and approaching caregiving in a systemic way will make your job easier and help you determine if more, and how much more support is needed. Begin by journaling the day's events and tasks, when each occurs, and how much time each task takes.



Consider journaling the normal aging signs/behaviors that occur daily versus the abnormal signs/behaviors. This will help you assess the condition of the person you care for and any changes that occur.

If you are feeling stressed, journal which tasks make you feel particularly stressed, your feelings at the time, and how you coped. This can help you decide if it would be better for someone else to take over certain tasks, or some things that you might do differently to lessen your stress.

Journaling activities will make it easier and more accurate to develop a chart that lists all tasks. This chart can be used if you decide to hire in-home help or ask for help from family, friends, church members, etc.

There are several different ways to chart tasks. The following example chart is also in Module 7, Community Supports for Remaining at Home, and there are links to other examples in the following paragraphs.

Create a list of caregiving tasks you need help with, are willing to allow others to do while you take time for yourself. **Ask for help** from family, friends, and neighbors. Access community resources that may be available to help you. **Share your list** so they will know what type of help you need and can choose which task they feel comfortable doing.

Care Need	Is Help Needed?	Frequency	Current Helper	Who Else Can Assist or Complete this Task
Respite Care for Caregiver	__yes__no			
Bathing Assistive devices needed	__yes__no __yes__no			
Dressing/ Grooming	__yes__no			
Eating/Feeding Assistive devices needed	__yes__no __yes__no			
Toileting Assistive devices needed	__yes__no __yes__no			
Continence Need incontinence supplies	__yes__no __yes__no			
Walking/ Transferring Assistive devices needed	__yes__no __yes__no			
Meal Preparation Meals on Wheels Congregate Meals Ensure, Boost, etc.	__yes__no __yes__no __yes__no __yes__no			
Housework/ Laundry	__yes__no			
Medication Management Assistive devices needed	__yes__no __yes__no			
Transportation	__yes__no			
Shopping	__yes__no			
Telephone Assistive devices needed	__yes__no __yes__no			
Vision Assistive devices needed	__yes__no __yes__no			
Safety Devices /Equipment ERS System Safe Return Med Alert Bracelet Door/window alarms Other equipment	__yes__no __yes__no __yes__no __yes__no __yes__no			

Home Mods/Repairs Yard Care	__yes__no __yes__no			
Money Management	__yes__no			

A slightly different chart lists each task, level of care, the frequency, and whether your care recipient performs the task, you perform the task, family or friends can perform the task, or if paid help is needed for the task. More information with chart headings can be found at <http://www.snocare.org/kit/o6Caregiving-GettingOrganized.pdf>

A different way to develop the chart is to list the tasks in separate boxes in one column and the level of help in the next column, from none, to some, to a lot. An example of this chart can be found at the following website:

<http://www.lindarhodescaregiving.com/dailyliving.pdf>

HYGIENE



Hygiene tasks are important, but may become more difficult for the person you care for to complete. The following tips are designed to make your job a little easier.



Dressing/Organizing Clothing

- Allow the person to dress themselves as much as possible.
- Use Velcro instead of buttons or ties.
- Pants with elastic waists are easier.
- Buy duplicate clothing if the person likes to wear the same thing all the time.
- Dress in layers to avoid getting chilled or too hot.
- Hang whole outfits together.
- Label clothing for easier identification.
- Use plastic clips or “sock locks” for socks.



Bathing

- Try to stay relaxed, pleasant, and low-key.
- Create a calm atmosphere, such as warming up the shower, playing soft music they like, lighting a scented candle, etc.
- For safety reasons, recommend showers. If the person prefers baths, suggest a portable bath.
- Consider using a hand-held shower nozzle, a shower bench or chair, and installing grab bars.
- Wash gently and pat dry. Don't scrub or rub fragile skin.
- The best order of bathing is to start with the face, then torso and arms, then legs and feet, and the private parts LAST. If the person resists or doesn't like being washed, try to at least wash the private parts before finishing.
- One reason people may have problems with bathing or going to the bathroom is that they often lack depth perception and have limited vision. When there are a lot of white and soft colors they can't tell where the edges of tubs, showers, or toilets are. It may help to outline the tub, shower lip, or toilet with black or blue masking or painters tape so that a person can see the edges. Another option is to install a brightly colored toilet seat and/or cover that contrasts with the floor and walls.
- Be aware that some people with dementia may find the sound of running water frightening – if so, fill up the tub with several inches of water before they enter. Some people with dementia also find the term, “bath/bathing” agitating. Using pampering terms such as, “skin treatment” or “spa” to induce a feeling of relaxation or special treatment have proven to be helpful.

- If the person you care for values privacy, they may feel more comfortable with a towel draped over them. There is no harm in leaving the towel on them in the shower or tub.

Mouth Care



- Good regular oral care can prevent disease. Dental disease can lead to other serious health concerns. Bacteria from the mouth can travel to other parts of the body.
- The person you care for should continue to have dental checkups every 6–12 months.
- Monitor your care recipient for chipped teeth, gum bleeding, red or swollen gums, loss of taste, or bad breath.
- Teeth should be brushed twice daily. Brushing before bed is the most important. Make sure to brush every tooth, one at a time. An electric toothbrush is more effective.
- Floss once a day using an automatic flosser or by hand.
- Clean dentures once a day and ask your dentist to repair if they get broken. Before putting them in the mouth, brush the roof of the mouth and the gums.
- The person may be able to brush their own teeth by adapting the toothbrush handle. A website with good information for assistive devices is www.abledata.com.



Nails



- Inspect the nails regularly.
- Assemble any supplies needed.
- Wash your hands and your care recipient's hands.
- Trim, file, or clip fingernails only. Trim straight across. It is easiest to trim or file after bathing or soaking in warm water when they are softest.

- Massage hands and feet with lotion and rub into the fingernails and cuticles.
- Toenails should only be clipped by a podiatrist. Some make house calls.



Hair

- A simple short hairstyle will be easier to care for, but find out which style the person you care for prefers. Encourage an easy to maintain hairstyle.
- Trim regularly as more mature hair splits more easily and will be easier to take care of.
- Assemble supplies before you begin. Make sure the water and room temperature are comfortable as many older people are more sensitive to hot and cold.
- Use baby or a gentle shampoo and conditioner, so they won't burn your care recipient's eyes. Dry shampoo can also be used on hair as an occasional option.
- Some hairdressers will make house calls or reduce rates for elderly people. It may be well worth the money for the person you care for to visit a salon weekly or monthly if they enjoy it. An in-home caregiver may also be asked to take care of hair.



Incontinence

- Incontinence, both urinary and bowel, is one of the most emotional and difficult issues for you and the person you care for to deal with.
- It's a good idea to take your care recipient to a doctor to be evaluated and determine if there is an underlying cause that should be addressed or treated. There are different reasons for incontinence with several treatment options. Try to find

out all you can about the underlying cause and recommended treatments. Usually doctors start with the least invasive option.

- Make sure the path to the bathroom is clear, the toilet is easy to use, and clothes are simple to remove. If the person you care for has dementia and forgets to go to the bathroom, it may help to kindly remind or take them frequently.
- If treatment options, behavioral changes or medication hasn't helped, you may need to convince your care recipient to wear adult briefs.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND EXERCISE



Exercise is the best prescription for healthy aging. Inactive people are about twice as likely to develop heart disease, according to the U.S. Surgeon General, with more medication and visits to the doctor and hospital. Regular activity prevents or delays many diseases and disabilities.



Regular physical activity and exercise can help the person you care for maintain their strength, flexibility, endurance, balance, range of motion, and independence. In addition, exercise improves circulation, decreases blood pressure and cholesterol levels, improves the body's ability to use insulin, and decreases muscle and bone density loss. Research has shown frequent exercise helps to prevent falls. Exercise may also improve sleep and mood. Exercise has also been shown to improve or maintain cognitive function.



Even though all older adults should try to be as active as possible, it's a good idea to discuss exercise options with a doctor. Encourage the person you care for to frequently participate in activities that are enjoyable, such as walking, gardening, swimming, or yoga. Often gyms offer senior discounts. Many senior centers offer free

exercise classes. Check to see if your care recipient has Silver Sneakers through their Medicare plan that offers low cost gym visits. There are also a wide variety of DVDs and television programs. If possible, try to encourage your care recipient to engage in a complete routine that includes stretching, strengthening, balancing, and aerobic exercises. Stretching allows for more range of motion and movement, strengthening will build muscles and increase metabolism, aerobic exercise builds endurance and improves cardiovascular and circulatory systems, and balancing will build leg muscles and help prevent falls.



If the person you care for has limited mobility, discuss different exercise options with a physical therapist that can help improve muscle tone, circulation, flexibility, and strength.

PREVENTING PRESSURE SORES



If the person you care for uses a wheelchair or spends most of the time in bed, pressure ulcers or sores may develop, even when careful procedures are followed. As pressure sores can be very difficult and expensive to treat, it's important to try everything possible to prevent them.

Frequent changes in position are the key strategy in preventing pressure sores. Position changes should occur regularly and avoid pressure on the skin. Change positions at least hourly in a wheelchair and every two hours in a bed.



Good wheelchair cushions that are foam, gel, water, or air can make a difference. It is best to consult with a physical therapist to ensure proper positioning. A doctor may recommend the best type of mattress or foam pad that can help relieve pressure.

A nutritious diet with plenty of fluids during the day can improve the condition of your care recipient's skin.

Skin should be checked daily for pressure ulcers or skin irritation. The first step is to relieve pressure from the area. If a sore develops, a physician should be consulted as soon as possible. Sores may take several weeks to months before they heal.

BODY MECHANICS FOR THE CAREGIVER



It will improve your strength, fitness, and endurance if you start or maintain a regular exercise program. Consider exercising with your care recipient on a frequent basis, if possible. Check into classes at a gym, senior or community center. There may be a good program on television. There is a variety to choose from on DVD. Try to frequently engage in the physical activities you enjoy on your own or with your care recipient, friends, family, or neighbors.



Being a caregiver may place stress on your back. It's essential to use correct posture, alignment, and body mechanics at all times to avoid injury. Try to keep your back straight so the normal curve of your spine is maintained.



When lifting, make sure you have a broad stable base of support with your legs shoulder width apart. Lift with your legs, not your back. Lower yourself to the ground by bending your knees. Never bend your back or twist to pick something up. Tighten your stomach muscles, which will help keep your back in a good position. Keep the person or whatever you are lifting or carrying close to your body. Whenever possible, gently push instead of pull objects. Never lift more than you can comfortably manage. Ask a neighbor, friend, or family member for help if you're straining.

Transferring can easily cause injuries as it is easy to twist and bend at the waist. Try to keep the wheelchair, commode, or whatever you are transferring to close to the bed. Ask a physical therapist for training if possible. Allow the person to assist as much as they are able. This will help maintain their independence and make it easier for you. Transfer the person you care for starting with the feet, then the trunk, and head. Ask the person to hold on to the wheelchair or commode rails, if possible. Remember to keep your back straight and bend your knees with your feet apart at about shoulder width. Let your care recipient know what you are doing. Count out loud to three and then lift so they have a verbal cue.



Evaluate your abilities and limits on a regular basis. If you are ill or are having trouble with transferring or other tasks, always ask for help and/or consider hiring someone before you become injured.

REVIEW



We hope that this information has been helpful. This is the first of 12 modules in this series. The rest of the titles are listed at the end. Throughout this series we will explore a variety of resources that can support you. Let's review the general guidelines to providing care.



- Always remember to take care of yourself so you are better able to take care of others.
- Ask for and let other people help you. It's good for them and makes your job easier.
- Learn and practice ways to cope with stress.
- Organize your time and tasks and use available planning tools.
- Respect and communicate with the person you care for.

- Let your care recipient know what you are doing, and listen to their concerns and feelings. Point out their strengths often.
- Provide choices when possible and follow their preferences.
- Assess your home for hazards.

YOU ARE A CHAMPION



“You have the colors of a true champion, a hero. Were you born with these colors? No, I think you earned them. Whatever else happens as your life unfurls, you will have the strength and courage you need. Choose your own path. Believe in yourself. You have the power, insight, and wisdom to succeed. For yours are the colors of a hero, a true champion, a caregiver,”

Judith Rappaport-Musson, *Eldercare 911*, pages 259-260.

SUMMARY



- Remember to take good care of yourself by staying positive, eating nutritiously, exercising regularly, using good body mechanics, sleeping enough, keeping your sense of humor, relaxing, and doing something enjoyable when you can.
- Always believe in yourself and your abilities.
- You have the strength, compassion, insight, and wisdom to succeed.

UCARE MODULE TOPICS

1. Providing Personal Care
2. Dementia and Memory Loss
3. A) Caring for Older Adults with Chronic Health Issues
3. B) Caring for Children with Special Health Care Needs
4. The Accessible Home
5. Taking Care of the Caregiver

6. Caring for those with Depression, Anxiety, Stress, or Mental Health Issues
7. Community Supports for Remaining at Home
8. Working Effectively with In-Home Service Providers
9. Keeping Your Home and the Person You Care for Safe
10. Eating Healthy for Life
11. Assistive Devices: Tools to Help You
12. Legal and Financial Matters: What You Need to Know

For more information, please visit: <http://www.ucare.utah.gov>

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For more information, please visit: <http://www.ucare.utah.gov>,
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