



Caring for the Caregivers

(NAPSA)—Increasingly, health care professionals around the country are addressing an important need by asking a surprising question. The question? “Are you taking care of an aging relative at home?”

The reason? Individuals in one in four U.S. households would answer “yes” and many doctors know that the stresses of being a family caregiver can increase health risks. In fact, researchers have found that more than a third of caregivers provide intense and continuing care to others while suffering from poor health themselves.

Fortunately, there are a number of things doctors can do to help. First, they can assure caregivers that it’s not just okay to ask for help—it may be essential for themselves and those they care for.

“People have a hard time admitting they feel frustration or fatigue or resentment,” explains one physician. “We need to point out that it’s okay to voice those feelings. That first conversation can open an avenue to activate a cascade of support.”

Next, doctors and nurses can share survival tips for caregivers advocated by the U.S. Administration on Aging:

1. Plan ahead
2. Learn about available resources
3. Take one day at a time
4. Develop contingency plans
5. Accept help
6. Make your health a priority
7. Get enough rest and eat properly
8. Make time for leisure
9. Be good to yourself
10. Share your feelings with others.



People who care for ill or elderly spouses and parents may need—and can get—more help from physicians and others than they realize.

Finally, health care experts can provide information on organizations that can give caregivers a hand, from support groups and educational seminars for themselves to home delivered meals and transportation services for their loved ones.

Helping the health care providers with this task is *Making the Link: Connecting Caregivers with Services through Physicians*, a program of the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging.

The program provides a self-assessment questionnaire to help caregivers identify themselves and a referral to local agency services. With or without a health care practitioner’s intervention, any caregiver can find help in his or her community by contacting the Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116 or www.eldercare.gov.