

CAREGIVERS NEED VACATIONS TOO



Checklist for a Guilt-Free Getaway

Being the primary care-giver to an elderly parent can be an overwhelming responsibility, even if you aren't raising a family of your own. For those in the "sandwich" generation—who are providing care for kids and parents at the same time—the enormity of the task can leave you feeling drained of all energy. That is why it is so important to make time for relaxation whenever possible. Think of yourself as the captain of a ship—if you go down, the ship will go down with you!

Though it may feel like abandonment of your duties, taking the occasional vacation is a necessary part of being there for your parent. Getting away every now and then can help restore peace of mind, balance, and the energy you need to take care of your loved ones over the long-run. Luckily, there are plenty of ways to ensure your loved one is taken care of while you are away.

Checklist of Things to Provide a Temporary Caregiver

- Important Phone numbers where you can be reached in case of an emergency; backup phone number of someone traveling with you or the hotel where you will be staying, in case you are unable to be reached for any reason
- Medications List and Medications your parent takes and a daily schedule listing the times and doses of each medication
- Contact information for the physician who is most familiar with your parent's condition. Phone numbers for the local ER and pharmacy that fills your parent's prescriptions
- Shopping list of your parent's favorite foods and hygiene supplies
- Extra set of keys to your parent's home, preferably left with a trusted neighbor or relative
- List of any upcoming appointments your parent might have scheduled and detailed directions to each destination
- Enough cash to cover any expected and unexpected expenses that might be necessary during your absence.
- Back up caregiver phone number in case your parent's temporary caregiver has an emergency or becomes unavailable at any time while you are away
- Instructions telling the temporary caregiver about your parent's likes, dislikes, quirks, special needs, and favorite TV shows, music, books, places, or foods—this is particularly important if your parent suffers from memory problems or dementia.

Respite Care Options

In-home respite care: If you feel your parent would do better by remaining home while you are away, a home care agency is a good option. Home care agencies provide in-home services for senior citizens, including preparing meals, shopping for groceries, house-cleaning, bathing, dressing, toileting, and medication reminders. There are even companion services that will stop by your parents' home just to visit.

Adult Day-Care: If your parent is okay with being alone during the evening hours, you might arrange a ride to a daily adult-care facility, where they will be supervised throughout the day. It's an effective way to make sure your loved one has social contact while you are out of town.

Volunteer Visitors: Church groups, neighbors, family members, or friends may be willing to keep your loved one safe and entertained while you are away. Many church groups participate with local area agencies on aging (AAA) or take part in Faith in Action and Caregiver programs, that provide minimal respite care through a "Friendly Visitor" program.

Temporary Senior Care Facility Stay: Some assisted living facilities and nursing homes provide temporary respite-care services to dependent seniors whose caregivers need a short break. Ask your local AAA for recommendations, and call to set up a brief tour of the facility.

Financing Respite Care

If you need help to pay for your loved one's temporary respite care, contact your local AAA for information on federal or state programs that provide aid. The National Family Caregiver Support Program gives annual funding to states for the assistance of respite-care patients and their families.

Preparing for your Departure

Once you have located an appropriate temporary care-giver for your parent, be sure to provide them with any necessary information about medications, physicians, insurance and prescription cards, legal documents related to advanced directives, living wills, power of attorney, or hospitalization, as well as a list of your loved one's daily needs and habits and a number where you can be reached in case of an emergency. Let your parent know that you are only a phone call away and that you will be back soon, then enjoy your guilt-free vacation, knowing that your parent is in good hands and that taking care of you is also taking care of your loved one.

It's been our belief for over 25 years that every senior should be able to remain healthy, happy, and at home. Every day, we partner with family caregivers to give seniors the control they need to live in their homes for as long as possible. If you are a family caregiver and you feel you could use a little help keeping your senior loved one home contact us at caringseniorservice.com to discuss your loved ones care needs with the Caring Senior Service office nearest you.

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