



TIPS

from the Consumer Health Action Network

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Are you a caregiver?

Helping a loved one nearing the end of life

Most people who provide care for a friend or family member don't think of themselves as a caregiver. Caregivers provide support to someone who needs help. It doesn't matter how many hours per week are spent providing support. Caregivers may live with the person they are caring for, providing assistance with daily needs, or may visit the person or call regularly.

Being a caregiver involves an investment in time and energy. Be sure to take care of yourself so that you stay healthy. Caregivers need breaks, exercise, and socializing. Support groups exist for almost every situation and are an excellent way to share information, find help, and deal with difficult situations with people who understand. Your loved one's health care provider or institution may know of a support group you could join.

Helping a loved one nearing the end of life:

The stress, emotion, and time needed to care for a loved one who is near death can be overwhelming. Your loved one's doctor may refer you to hospice care. **Hospice care** is for any person who has a life-threatening or incurable illness. The care is delivered by a hospice team that focuses on the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of the patient. A hospice team includes the patient's doctor, a hospice doctor, nurses, home health aides, social workers, clergymen, and therapists. The most important part of hospice care is keeping the patient with loved ones and pain-free until death. Most hospice patients are cared for in their own homes. Care can also be provided in hospitals, nursing homes, and other long term care facilities. Counseling services for both you and your loved one are an important part of hospice care. After your loved one's death, grief support will usually be offered to your family for at least one year.

Hospice is paid for through the Medicare Hospice Benefit, Medicaid Hospice Benefit, and most private insurers and HMOs. If your loved one does not have coverage through Medicare, Medicaid, or a private insurance company, many hospices will work with you and your loved one to make sure you can get the services you need.

Call the Consumer Health Action Network at 203-772-2817 or toll-free in CT at 888-873-4585 for more information.