



TIPS

from the Consumer Health Action Network

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Are you a caregiver?

Helping someone who doesn't speak English

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 someone who doesn't speak English:

If someone you know needs to see a doctor and doesn't speak English, they should take someone with them who can translate. Sometimes there will be a translator at the clinic, but don't count on it.

If the non-English speaking person is an adult, it may seem easy to ask for help from a younger family member. This is not a good idea; children shouldn't be responsible for what information reaches the parent from the doctor and adults may be less open about their health problems in front of children.

If you are working with a translator:

- Be aware that translators are not perfect. They may leave out words, add words, or change the question. Sometimes what the doctor asks is not what the patient hears from the translator.
- Try to use translators who share the racial and ethnic background of the patient.
- Try to use a translator who is the same sex as the patient. Talking about health problems is very personal.
- Give the translators, the patient, and his or her family time to "warm up," to compare experiences and backgrounds. It could be harmful to start the appointment too quickly.
- Ask the non-English speaking patient to repeat the doctor's instructions to make sure he or she understands.

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