What are the signs of caregiver burnout?

As a caregiver, you’re under a lot of stress. It’s common for caregivers like you to let your own health suffer. So, watch out for:

• Excessive use of alcohol, medications or sleeping pills
• Appetite changes — either eating too much or too little
• Depression, hopelessness, feelings of alienation, lack of energy to do new things
• Losing control physically or emotionally
• Neglect or rough treatment of the person for whom you are caring
• Trouble falling or staying asleep
• Difficulty concentrating, missing appointments

If you recognize the warning signs of burnout in yourself, remember that it will only get worse if you leave it alone. You need to take steps to get your life back into balance.

How can I avoid burnout?

It takes a combination of things to avoid burnout. Taking care of your physical health is a good way to stay emotionally healthy. Start working towards achieving your health goals. Take it one day at a time and make small changes.

Follow the ABC’s of preventing heart disease and stroke:

• **Avoid tobacco**
• **Become more active**
• **Choose good nutrition**

This will go a long way toward healing your heart and strengthening your mind.

What do I do about depression?

Clinical depression is a serious illness and can keep you from being a good caregiver for your loved one. Depression is also common among survivors of heart and stroke events. It’s important to learn the signs of...
Lifestyle + Risk Reduction

Caregiving

Depression and get help if you experience several of these symptoms for two weeks or more.

• Depressed mood marked loss of interest or pleasure
• Feeling worthless or guilty
• Change in appetite or weight
• Loss of energy
• Fearfulness of activity
• Sleeping too much or too little
• Lack of interest in personal hygiene
• Lack of interest in sex
• Anxiety
• Tearfulness
• Easily distracted
• Agitation or restlessness
• Inability to concentrate or make decisions

Depression can often be treated with medication. If you need help dealing with your emotions, seek out a support group, counselor or physician. If you have thoughts of death or suicide, seek help immediately.

What Is Caregiver Burnout?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It’s very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.

Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease.

For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at StrokeAssociation.org.

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/answersbyheart to learn more.

Knowledge is power, so Learn and Live!