

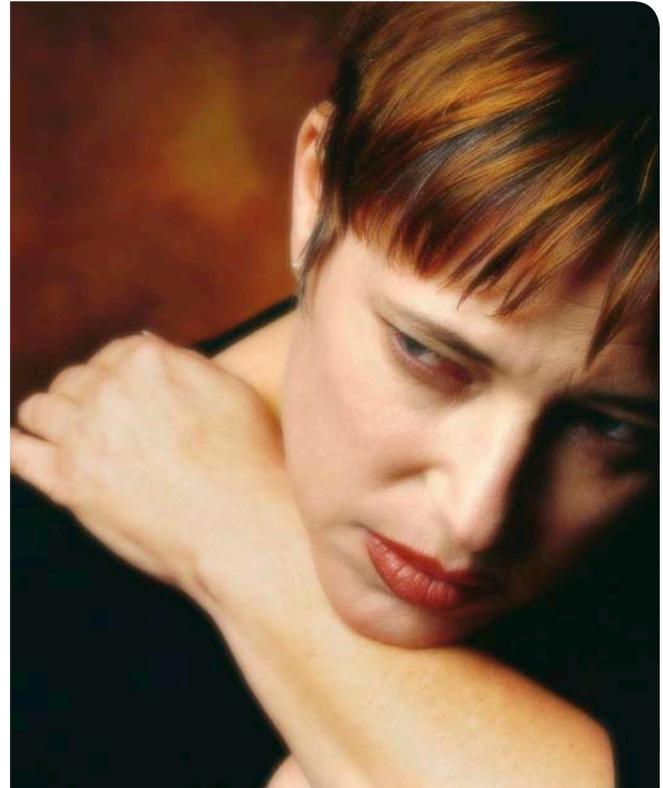


What Is Caregiver Burnout?

Caregiver burnout is caused by too much long-term stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed and can't meet constant demands. As the stress continues, you begin to lose the interest or motivation that led you to take on a certain role.

Your emotional and psychological health can affect your physical health. Many caregivers don't take time to care for themselves. They begin to show signs of caregiver burnout.

Your healthy body, mind and spirit benefit your loved one just as they benefit you. Learn the signs of caregiver burnout and seek help if you're having them.



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 health suffer. So, watch out for:

- Excessive use of alcohol, medications or sleeping pills
- Appetite changes — 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're caring
- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Missing appointments

If you recognize the warning signs of burnout, it will only get worse if you ignore them. 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:

- **A**void tobacco.
- **B**ecome more active.
- **C**hoose 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 depression and get help if you experience several of these

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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.



If you are suffering from depression, joining a support group may be an effective way to deal with your emotions.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2** Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3** Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

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

For example:

I think that I have too many signs of depression. Is there a treatment that will help me feel better and provide better care for my loved one?

My Questions:

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.