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ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN

MAY 2012

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: CAREGIVER STRESS

If you are a caregiver of an elderly person or someone with a chronic illness, you probably know how stressful caregiving can be. It is not uncommon for people who are caregivers to experience extreme stress and “caregiver burnout.”

What could cause caregiver burnout?

For many people caregiving is a very rewarding activity. However, because caregiving requires so much time on a daily basis, the person who is

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There are many support groups that can help caregivers.

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caregiving may not feel they have the opportunity to take care of their own needs.

What are some signs of caregiver burnout?

When a caregiver is feeling stressed, there may be signals. If you are a caregiver or know someone who is, watch for these warning signs of burnout:

- Problems with sleeping or relaxing
- Sudden weight gain or loss
- Stressed relationships, especially with other family members
- Frequent sudden mood swings
- Sudden anger or bad temper
- Crying for no reason
- Unable to concentrate; feeling of distraction
- Aches and pains
- Headaches
- Using alcohol or drugs

What can you do if you or someone you know has any of these signs?

Take basic steps for stress reduction:

- Stay positive
- Know that there are things you cannot change
- Exercise on a regular basis
- Get enough rest and sleep
- Do not rely on drugs or alcohol to help in stress management

Especially for caregivers:

- Do not think that you have to do it all by yourself. There are a lot of support groups that can help a caregiver — church groups, community services and home health aides can give a caregiver a needed break.
- Stay connected to others. Family and friends can be a great help just by supporting you. Have a list of people you can call and talk to when feeling stressed.
- Eating regularly and exercising can be a big



help. Also, participating in a hobby, listening to music or even writing in a journal can help lessen stress.

- Do not wait to ask for help. Being tired and needing sleep will make it easier to get angry or frustrated. If there is someone who can help out for a few hours it can make a world of difference and allow some time for the caregiver to take care of his or her own needs.

Caregiving can be a very rewarding job. It can also be very stressful. If you or someone you know is a caregiver, share resources and people who may help care for them. Also, that it is important that caregivers take care of themselves.

REFERENCES:

- WebMD.com. Tips for coping with caregiver stress. January 3,2012.

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