



LiveHealthy

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Caring for Loved Ones and Ourselves

Most of us will be informal caregivers at some point during our lives. On average, more than 44 million Americans provide unpaid care to an elderly or disabled adult every year. Altogether, informal caregivers provide 80 percent of long-term care in the United States.

- Sixty-one percent of caregivers are women.
- Most caregivers are middle-aged.
- Thirteen percent of caregivers are aged 65 years and older.
- Fifty-nine percent of informal caregivers have jobs in addition to caring for another person.

Caregiving can be a rewarding way to spend time with a loved one, but it can also take a toll on the caregiver's health. Caregivers often are so busy taking care of their loved one that they can neglect their own health. While many caregivers are in good health, it is not uncommon for caregivers to develop health problems.

Research shows that caregivers:

- Are more likely to have symptoms of depression or anxiety
- Are more likely to have a long-term medical problem such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or arthritis.
- Have higher levels of stress hormones.
- Spend more days sick with an infectious disease.
- Have a weaker immune response to the flu vaccine.
- Have higher levels of obesity.
- May be at higher risk for mental decline, including problems with memory and paying attention.

Discover more with Healthwise® Knowledgebase

For additional support and resources you may need as a caregiver for someone chronically ill or disabled, visit the Healthwise Knowledgebase on capbluecross.com. Topics include:

- Reducing the stress of caregiving
- Disease-specific caregiving tips
- Advance care planning
- Self-help organizations and support groups

Simply login to your Capital BlueCross member page, click the Wellness tab, and enter "caregiver" in the search box. Make sure your browser is not blocking pop-ups.

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Not taking care of your physical and emotional health will have an effect on your overall health and your ability to care for a loved one. Neglecting your own health also may put your loved one at risk.

For your sake and your loved ones', don't ignore these possible burnout signs:

- Feeling sad, unusually anxious, or moody; crying more often than usual
- Having trouble sleeping or getting out of bed
- Having low energy or lacking interest in things you usually enjoy
- Feeling short of breath or like you have a knot in your throat, or chest pains
- Getting frequent stomach cramps or headaches
- Drinking too much alcohol (more than one drink a day)
- Eating too much or too little

Pay attention to these symptoms and get help if you need it. Talk to your doctor about your physical and emotional symptoms. Make sure he or she knows you are a caregiver.

- Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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Recipe Row

Veggie Omelet Pita

Ingredients (serves 1):

- 1 large eggs
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3 tsp. olive oil
- ½ cup spinach
- ⅓ cup baby bella mushrooms, sliced
- ½ cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 pita pocket

Directions:

Whisk eggs and season with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a skillet and cook eggs, stirring frequently for one to two minutes. Stir in spinach, mushrooms, and tomatoes, and cook until eggs are set and vegetables soft. Spoon mixture into pita halves.

Nutrition:

250 calories / 10 g fat /
25 g carbohydrates /
8 g protein

See more recipes and share your own tips for living healthy at capitalbluestore.com/blog.

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