

## For Caregivers: Taking Care of Yourself

Caregivers of persons with Alzheimer's disease or dementia often feel overwhelmed, tired and stressed because of the long-term responsibility of taking care of someone who needs help with most or all activities of daily living. It's important to recognize that these feelings are normal and experienced by many caregivers. At times, you may feel:

- Embarrassed about your relative's incontinence.
- Overwhelmed and exhausted about having to assist your relative with bathing, change soiled clothing, do extra laundry and repeatedly change bed linens.
- Frustrated that your efforts to get your relative to the bathroom in time to prevent leakage don't always succeed.
- Upset that your relative doesn't always cooperate.
- Worried that you can't or don't know how to take care of your loved one.
- Concerned and depressed about your relative's physical and mental decline.
- Worried about the future without your loved one.

As a caregiver, you also need to take care of yourself. It is OK — even beneficial — to take time for yourself. Here are some tips:

- Do a “care fatigue check”: Ask yourself how you feel. Do you feel tired? Overwhelmed? Exhausted? Upset? If so, it's a sign that you need to accept help taking care of your loved one.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. Ask a neighbor, family member or friend to stay with your relative so you can have time to rest or do something you enjoy.
- Find an organization that provides adult daycare to give you a respite.
- Talk about your concerns with family members, friends, community members (e.g., members of your church) or your relative's health care provider.
- Hire part-time help or ask a friend or family member to stop by once a day to help with bath time, laundry, cooking, etc.
- Make a plan for managing incontinence, even if your loved one doesn't have it yet. Knowing you have a plan will help you feel more prepared and in control.
- Remember that incontinence is not intentional; it is a consequence of a serious medical condition.

