

Alzheimer's
Association
South Central
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Office Hours:
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Programs and
Services:

Helpline

Support Groups

Early Stage Memory
Loss Program

Care Management

Family Counseling

Speakers Bureau

Educational
Workshops and
Training Programs

Research

Advocacy

Are You A Healthy Caregiver?

Are you so committed to caregiving tasks that you may have neglected your own physical, mental, and emotional well-being? The following questions can help you determine if you are putting your health at risk.

Do you visit your physician annually?

The best thing you can do for the person with Alzheimer's disease is to stay healthy. Respect what your body is telling you. Take exhaustion, stress, sleeplessness, and changes in your appetite or behavior seriously. Ignoring these symptoms can cause your physical and mental health to decline. And, if you're a woman, your role as an Alzheimer caregiver is most likely occurring at a time in your life, often during menopause or after menopause, when you need to pay even closer attention to your own health. Various treatments, such as estrogen replacement therapy and calcium supplements, can be beneficial in protecting a woman's health later in life. You should discuss these treatments and other health matters with your doctor.

Do you accept assistance from others?

You can't do everything. Attempting to handle everything yourself will only lead to burnout, depression, and resentment toward the person for whom you are caring. You are not failing as a caregiver by asking others for assistance.

When friends and family offer help, accept it. Also look into community resources that offer respite from caregiving responsibilities.

Do you talk to others about your feelings?

You may think that no one understands what you are going through. Holding in your feelings, however, will only make you feel isolated and emotionally neglected. Sharing your experiences with others may help you put things into perspective.

There are seven simple steps you can take to ensure that you are a healthy caregiver:

1. See your physician regularly.
2. Get screened for stress and depression.
3. Get plenty of rest.
4. Eat well-balanced meals.
5. Exercise regularly.
6. Accept help from others.
7. Call the Alzheimer's Association.

Excerpted from "Are You a Healthy Caregiver?" the Alzheimer's Association, 1999.