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The Empowered Caregiver

Together With You on Your Ceresti Caregiver Journey



FEATURED ARTICLE

Caring for Your Loved One During the Summer

Summer can be a wonderful time of year, but for caregivers, the season brings unique challenges. Whether your loved one has dementia, a chronic illness, or other health conditions, summer requires extra attention. Here are some practical tips to help you care for your loved one and ensure a safe, enjoyable summer.

1. Keep Cool in the Heat

Hot weather can be especially hard on older adults and those with certain health conditions. As a caregiver, it's important to prevent dehydration and heatstroke.

- **Stay Hydrated:** Encourage your loved one to drink water regularly, even if they don't feel thirsty. Dehydration can cause confusion and other health problems. Water-based snacks like watermelon or cucumber are also great for hydration.
- **Limit Outdoor Time:** The hottest part of the day is usually from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Plan outdoor activities early in the morning or

later in the evening when it's cooler. When outside, try to find shaded areas to stay out of direct sunlight.

- **Comfortable Clothing:** Dress your loved one in lightweight, loose-fitting clothes made of breathable fabrics like cotton. A wide-brimmed hat can also help protect them from the sun.

2. Plan Low-Energy Activities

While summer is a time to enjoy the outdoors, not all activities need to be physically demanding. There are plenty of low-energy activities that allow your loved one to engage without getting too tired.

- **Outdoor Spaces:** Take advantage of shaded areas in parks, gardens, or on your porch. Enjoy a quiet picnic or relax while soaking in the scenery.
- **Gentle Exercise:** Encourage light activities, such as short walks, gentle stretching, or water-based exercises. These can improve physical health without causing exhaustion.

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- **Engage in Hobbies:** Summer is a great time to enjoy crafts, listen to music, or look through family photo albums. These activities keep your loved one mentally stimulated and foster quality time together.

3. Protect from the Sun

Exposure to the sun can be harmful, especially for older adults or those with sensitive skin. It's essential to keep your loved one protected from the summer sun.

- **Use Sunscreen:** Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher to all exposed skin, even on cloudy days. Reapply every two hours, especially if they're sweating or swimming.
- **Seek Shade:** Stay in shaded areas when outdoors to minimize sun exposure. A portable umbrella or a wide-brimmed hat can also help protect them from harmful rays.

4. Adjust the Home Environment

As the temperature rises, it's important to ensure that your home is comfortable and safe for your loved one.

- **Cool the House:** If you don't have air conditioning, use fans or cool washcloths to help lower the temperature. Consider spending time in air-conditioned public spaces like libraries or shopping malls if your home is too hot.

- **Monitor for Heat-Related Issues:** Watch for signs of overheating, such as flushed skin, dizziness, or confusion. If you notice any of these symptoms, move your loved one to a cooler environment and offer fluids immediately.

5. Take Time for Yourself

Caregiving is a full-time job, and it can be physically and emotionally demanding. Don't forget to care for yourself too. Taking breaks is essential for your well-being.

- **Ask for Help:** Reach out to family, friends, or respite care services to take some time off. Even a short break can help you recharge and feel more prepared for caregiving.
- **Prioritize Self-Care:** Set aside a few minutes each day to relax, whether it's reading, going for a walk, or enjoying a quiet cup of tea. Taking care of your own health helps you provide the best care for your loved one.

Conclusion

Summer can be a great time to enjoy the outdoors and relax, but as a caregiver, it requires extra attention to your loved one's health and comfort. By staying mindful of hydration, protecting them from the sun, and planning low-energy activities, you can ensure a safe and enjoyable summer for both you and your loved one.

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To learn more about brain health visit **Ceresti's Brain Health Education Portal** at brainhealth.ceresti.com. If this is your first visit to the portal, use the code **GIVECARE** when you register.

Appetite and Weight Changes: A Sign of Underlying Health Issues

As a caregiver, it's common to notice changes in your loved one's eating habits. Sometimes, these changes are simply due to normal aging or a shift in daily routines. However, appetite and weight fluctuations can also be signs of underlying health issues that should be addressed. Recognizing these changes early can help ensure your loved one gets the care they need.

Appetite Loss

A sudden decrease in appetite can be concerning. It might happen for many reasons, including medications, depression, or even dental problems. If your loved one isn't eating enough, it can lead to unintentional weight loss and malnutrition, which can affect their overall health.

- **Medications:** Some medications can suppress appetite or cause nausea. If you suspect this might be the case, talk to the doctor about alternatives or ways to manage side effects.
- **Mental Health:** Conditions like depression or anxiety can also affect eating habits. If your loved one seems sad or uninterested in food, it might be a sign that they're struggling emotionally.
- **Physical Issues:** Difficulty chewing or swallowing can make eating uncomfortable. If they complain of mouth pain, dry mouth, or difficulty swallowing, consider a visit to the dentist or doctor.

Weight Loss or Gain

Unexplained weight loss or gain can signal health problems that require attention. If your loved one is losing weight without trying, it may indicate conditions such as thyroid problems, gastrointestinal disorders, or even cancer. On the other hand, significant weight gain might suggest issues like fluid retention, heart problems, or hormonal imbalances.

- **Unintentional Weight Loss:** If your loved one is losing weight rapidly, it's important to seek medical advice. This can be a sign of malnutrition or a more serious underlying condition.
- **Unintentional Weight Gain:** If you notice your loved one is gaining weight unexpectedly, especially around the abdomen or legs, this may be a sign of fluid retention, which could indicate heart or kidney problems.

What You Can Do

As a caregiver, it's important to monitor these changes closely. Encourage your loved one to eat balanced meals, and make food enjoyable by preparing meals they love. If appetite or weight changes persist, keep a record of what you're observing and discuss it with their healthcare provider. Early intervention can make a big difference in addressing the root cause and improving their quality of life.

At Ceresti, we understand how important it is to teach all of our caregivers how to recognize changes in their loved one's health. By noticing shifts in appetite or weight early on, caregivers can intervene in a timely fashion and help prevent more serious issues from developing.

Recognizing appetite and weight changes is an important part of caregiving. Being proactive and supportive can help ensure your loved one's health is prioritized and any issues are addressed promptly.

SELF-CARE FOR THE CAREGIVER

CREATING A SELF-CARE ROUTINE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

As a caregiver, you spend a lot of time caring for others. *But who takes care of you?*

Self-care is not selfish—it's necessary. When you feel your best, you're better able to support the ones you love. One of the best ways to stay balanced is by creating simple self-care rituals that fit into your daily routine.

Start small. A self-care ritual doesn't need to be long or complicated. It can be as simple as enjoying a cup of tea before anyone else wakes up or stepping outside for a few minutes of fresh air. What matters most is that it's something you enjoy and can do regularly.

Think about what helps you feel calm, focused, or energized. Some people find peace in quiet activities like journaling, stretching, or reading a book. Others recharge by walking, gardening, or listening to music. Choose one or two things that make you feel good and try to do them at the same time each day. This helps create a sense of routine and gives your brain and body something to look forward to.

It also helps to set boundaries. Let family and friends know that this time is important to you. Even just ten minutes a day can make a big difference over time. You deserve to feel supported, too.

If you're not sure where to start, pick one small action and try it for a week. Maybe it's five minutes of deep breathing before bed or writing down three things you're grateful for each morning. See how you feel and adjust as needed.

Remember, self-care isn't about being perfect—it's about being kind to yourself. Creating a routine that works for you can help bring a sense of peace and control, even on the busiest days.

You're doing important work. Take care of yourself, too. At Ceresti, we are committed to supporting our caregivers and encourage self-care as a vital part of your caregiving journey.

FAST FACTS FOR CAREGIVERS

How to Prepare and Get the Most Out of Medical Appointments

Doctor visits can feel overwhelming when you're caring for someone with dementia. A little planning can go a long way in making appointments more helpful and less stressful.

Before the visit: Write down your questions and concerns ahead of time. Keep a list of changes in behavior, sleep, appetite, or medication side effects. Bring a list of all current medications, including supplements.

During the visit: Take notes or ask the doctor if you can record the conversation. Don't be afraid to speak up or ask for something to be repeated. If your loved one has trouble answering questions, be ready to share what you've observed.

After the visit: Review what was said and follow up on any instructions. If something isn't clear, call the office for clarification. Keep all paperwork in one place so it's easy to find later.

You're an important part of the care team. Preparing for doctor visits helps you speak up for your loved one—and helps the doctor provide the best care possible.

Remember: *You know your loved one best, and your voice matters.*