

Caregiver Wellness: Putting Your Oxygen Mask on First

When you are caring for someone, it is easy to put their needs before your own. Imagine being on an airplane. When the oxygen masks drop, you are told to put on your own mask first before helping someone else. Caregiving works the same way. When you take care of yourself, you are better able to support the person you love.

This handout is here to support you, help protect your health, and remind you it is okay to ask for extra help when caring for your loved ones.

Am I a Caregiver?

If you help care for a family member or a person with health needs, you are a caregiver. Caregiving may look different for everyone. It can include helping with meals, medications, appointments, or personal care. Many people do not call themselves caregivers. They simply see it as helping someone they love.

If this sounds like you: you are a caregiver, your role matters and you are not alone.

Why Caregivers Need Care Too

Caregiving is often rewarding and meaningful. It may bring moments of love, connection, and purpose. Over time, some caregivers may begin to feel tired, stressed or overwhelmed. These feelings are common and can impact sleep, energy, mood, and overall health.

Warning Signs of Caregiver Strain

Noticing these signs early can help protect your health:

- Feeling very tired most days, even after resting.
- Feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or on edge often.
- Feeling sad, irritable, or emotionally drained.
- Finding it hard to focus or make simple decisions.
- Having trouble sleeping or sleeping more.
- Changes in appetite or skipping meals.
- Losing interest in things you usually enjoy.
- Feeling run down, getting sick more often, or having aches and pains.
- Feeling alone or like you have little support.

Small Ways to Care for Yourself

If you begin to feel overwhelmed or stressed try:

- Taking 5 slow, deep breaths before starting a task.
- Drinking a glass of water or having a light snack.
- Stepping outside for fresh air for a few minutes, or sitting near a window.
- Trying a gentle activity like walking, yoga, or drawing.
- Setting one small boundary each day e.g. saying no to one extra task so you can have time for yourself.
- Listening to a favorite song or calming music.
- Going to bed 10 minutes earlier.

Remind yourself: "I am doing the best I can."

more information on other side →

Call 8-1-1 Healthlink BC www.healthlinkbc.ca	Nurse	24 hours a day	Daily	Call 8-1-1 to speak with a nurse, ask a dietitian about nutrition, or a pharmacist about your medication.
	Dietitian	9 a.m. – 5 p.m.	Mon – Fri	
	Pharmacist	5 p.m. – 9 a.m.	Daily	
	Hearing Impaired	Call 7-1-1		

Caregiver Wellness *(continued)*

How to Ask for Help

Asking for help can feel difficult, especially if you are used to doing things on your own. Start by thinking about what help you may need. It could be a short break, help with a task, or someone to talk to.

Who Could I ask?

Support can come from many places including family, friends, your healthcare team, or other community services.

Conversation Starters:

- "Could you stay with _____ for a bit so I can take a break?"
- "I'm finding it hard to manage. What support or respite options are available?"
- "I'm a caregiver and I'm looking for extra support. Can you help me understand what's available?"

Remember: *You do not need to wait until you are feeling overwhelmed to ask for help. Being specific about your needs helps others know how to support you.*

Understanding Respite Care

Respite is scheduled short-term care that gives caregivers a break while their loved one continues to receive care they need. Respite care may last a few hours, a day, or longer depending on need.

Respite can be informal, such as reaching out to family or friends for help. It can also include formal support from home health services or community programs. Care may take place at home or in another care setting, depending on what is available and individual needs.

To learn more about respite services, visit the Interior Health Authority website:



Optional Resources

Better at Home Program:

Provides help with daily tasks (light cleaning, transportation, and groceries) so seniors can live safely at home and stay connected.

Family Caregivers of British Columbia:

Includes free classes, support groups, and one-to-one help for caregivers in B.C.

Pallium Canada: Provides simple guides, including the Atlas CareMap, to help you plan care and identify supports. Offers LEAP Carers, a free online course providing practical palliative care training and tools for caregivers.

Canadian Virtual Hospice: Step-by-step videos that show caregiver skills; easy-to-read information about serious illness, caregiver grief, and healing.

Canadian Centre for Caregiving Excellence:

Caregiver resources and wellness support (organized by province).

United Way British Columbia: Call 2-1-1 to find local services for food programs, transportation, and community supports.

Hope for Wellness Helpline: Free 24/7 mental health support for Indigenous peoples across Canada. Phone and online chat available.

QMUNITY: LGBTQ2S+ support and resources in B.C. Offers peer support groups, learning sessions, and help finding safe community services. Phone and online chat available during business hours.

The Waiting Room Revolution Podcast: A podcast hosted by doctors with stories and simple health tips for people with serious illness and their caregivers.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to your care team.

Main Contact Person: _____

Number: _____

Home and Community Care
Contact Number: _____