

ActiveWellness

Learning and good health for carers

Sleep Secrets

Ideas from carers!



Rest and Wellbeing
They go together!



Home Safety
Room by room



Build Strength!
Just twice a week



Rest and Wellbeing

They go together!



Family caring can be physically and emotionally exhausting. It's so easy to focus on the needs of others, but neglect our own. In many studies carers report concerns about their own health and wellbeing: exhaustion, anxiety, depression, isolation, poor eating habits, missing medical checks, lack of adequate sleep, and no time to exercise.

If you are a carer, it's important to find the time and resources to take care of your own health. A good night's sleep is one of the best ways you can nurture yourself.

Others are identifying sources of stress, and thinking of ways to reduce or manage tension. You probably can't change a family member who has always been stubborn or demanding, but you can control how you respond to demands.

How can you get the nutrition and rest you need? It is easy to ignore your own need for nourishment when you are busy and tired.

What are some ways (little ones and big ones) that will allow you to take time for yourself? Try to let others take part in the work of caring. Seek and accept their support. Perhaps others can make meals, run errands, spend time with the person you support, or take the children out to play.

Small changes can make a big difference. Sometimes letting go of unrealistic expectations, or adjusting your standards about how frequently or how well you perform a task (such as housekeeping) can free up time and ease feelings of constant pressure.

Let yourself be alone for a short time to clear your head. Get out for a breath of fresh air or a change of scene. Even a brief walk can be uplifting.

Exercise of any kind has many benefits. It promotes better sleep, reduces tension and depression, and increases energy. Think of ways you can fit a bit of exercise in your daily routine. (See our new Strength for Caring programme in this issue of ActiveWellness ... 7 exercises, 15 minutes, just twice a week to start!)

If your sleep is often disturbed at night, take a nap during the day if you can. Relax in a warm bath, read a book, or listen to music. Joining a support group or talking to others in similar situations can also help to ease tension. Others may have ideas you haven't thought of, or provide an outlet for stress-reducing laughter, comfort, and support.



Drink less coffee, especially later in the day.



Turn off the alarm if possible so it doesn't ring by accident.



Catnap when you can!

Sleep Secrets

We asked carers what they do to ensure a good night's sleep. Here are their tips!



Scent your linen with lavender or put a few drops of oil on your pillow.



Keep the bedroom at a comfortable temperature.



Have a soothing bath before bed or during the night if you can't sleep.

- Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Avoid caffeine four to six hours before bedtime, and cut down during the day. The same applies to nicotine or alcohol.
- "Avoid heavy meals close to bedtime. But a light snack helps me fall asleep!"
- Exercise in the late afternoon (a walk is great). Vigorous exercise within three to four hours of bedtime can inhibit sleep.
- Think of ways to reduce noise, light, and excessive room temperatures at bedtime.
- Move the alarm clock away from the bed, or turn it off if you can!
- Take a catnap or rest during the day so you can prevent the exhaustion that can build if sleep is often interrupted.
- Dab some lavender cream or oil on your temples or wrist pulse area. You will sleep soundly!
- "If you share a bed with a restless sleeper, bite the bullet and buy a good rubber mattress! If one of us tosses or turns or gets up in the night, the disturbance is minimal on the other side of the bed. The mattress is also warmer than our previous springs and padding mattress."
- Heat a small glass of milk with a teaspoon of honey.
- In bed think of nothing. Think of an empty space. If thoughts crowd your mind, think back to nothing. The mind soon has nothing to think about and you will drift off to sleep.
- Sleep in a separate room, and use a remote bell/door chime or baby monitor to summon you if needed.
- On cold nights, have warm slippers handy, and sleep in a woolly scarf!
- "I love my electric blanket."
- Don't worry about lack of sleep one night. The next night you'll be so tired that you'll sleep deeply between disruptions.
- Retire to bed early. Ensure you are comfortable (bed properly made, room at the right temperature, and use a favourite pillow).
- Don't do anything stimulating before going to bed, such as watching TV or using the computer.
- If your mind is whirling, get up and write down what you need to do tomorrow. This will get things 'out of your system' so you can sleep.
- If you are worrying in the middle of the night, remind yourself that there is nothing you can do about problems right now. Tell yourself you will deal with the problems tomorrow. This will help you to let go and sleep.
- "I've always found the good old tried and true methods work the best - the late night hot bath with epsom salts, some calming essential oil... and a glass of soothing tipples never hurts either."
- "Meditation always helps me."
- Rescue Remedy: 3 drops on the tongue half an hour before retiring.
- "Stop work and activity at 5pm. Have a wind-down, a good meal, and time to laugh. Go to bed at 9.30pm with a damn good book!"
- Listen to music or watch a humorous DVD.
- Sometimes re-reading a delightful, positive storybook (Winnie the Pooh) can be relaxing.
- "Lock the bedroom door!"
- Ask for help if you're really tired. Maybe a friend or family member can stay overnight while you catch up on sleep.

Send your ActiveWellness feedback to info@carers.net.nz If we have your email address, we can send you updates between issues!

Stay Safe At Home!

Room by room tips from ACC

One in three injuries happens at home. In fact, you're more likely to receive an injury at home than at work, on the road, or playing sport. We have asked ACC for some common sense suggestions to reduce injury risks at home. We have chosen these tips especially for families with health and disability needs. You can also listen to our injury prevention and home safety five minute features at www.familycareradio.net.nz These 'listen and learn' discussions with ACC are part of the new national wellbeing and learning initiative being developed for carers as part of the Government's Action Plan for the Carers' Strategy.



Find more home safety tips and advice at www.homesafety.com.nz ... a website ACC has developed with other partners to help New Zealanders avoid injuries and accidents at home.

Bathroom

Bathrooms are where clutter can accumulate

Is the bathroom set up so you and the person you're supporting can move around safely? Is everything you need nearby (clothes, towels, toiletries etc)?

Keep a cordless phone handy so you won't have to go to another room if the phone rings, leaving your family member or friend in a vulnerable situation

Check the bathroom environment for potential hazards (spilt shampoo, a bottle on the floor).

Are towels within easy reach?

Is the equipment you'll need in the correct place - or has it been moved?

Wear sensible non-slip footwear, and keep a towel on the floor if you anticipate spillages, so you can clean these up if they happen. Use a non-slip bath mat.

Do you have handrails in the right places for safety and easier lifting and transferring?



How can the bathroom be set up or equipped so the person you support

can be as independent as possible? Bath boards, handrails, shower chairs, and other aids are helpful for everyone.

Kitchen

The kitchen is the most dangerous room in the house, so the less traffic the better!

If you and your family member are in the kitchen at the same time, give them verbal reports so they know what's happening, even if they can't see you. If you are walking behind the person with a hot pot from the oven, for example, tell them.

Keep your kettle near cups, tea and coffee so you don't have to carry a jug of boiling water across the kitchen.

Only boil the water you need, or boil the kettle once and transfer the water you don't use immediately to a thermos flask. Often thermos flasks are easier to use than a kettle.

Mop up spills as soon as they happen, and pick up food from the floor quickly; fruit and vegetables can be very slippery!



Avoid feeding your pet or giving them scraps in or near the kitchen. People often trip over cats or dogs lingering around a busy area waiting for food. Pets are great companions, but they can also be a hazard!



Keep everything that your family member will need nearby to prevent them over-reaching and falling over. If you're going out, leave things they will want or need during the day on the kitchen bench, or at the front of the pantry or fridge.

Place milk for the day in a small, easy-to-use milk jug so your family member doesn't have to struggle with a bulky milk carton.

Living area



Assess living habits for risk. Do you precariously balance on a stool or your tiptoes to close the curtains each night, for example? It might be safer to use a grab stick so you don't have to lean over so much. Think of ways to reduce safety risks for tasks like this.

Keep living areas free of clutter. If the person you support will be alone for a great portion of the day, leave what they need within easy reach (phone, remote control, radio, snacks, a thermos of hot water for tea or coffee, a blanket, books or magazines, a pencil or pen, or any medication they will need to take).

At lunch time, many people can safely push a trolley, but may find carrying a plate full of food difficult. You could set up a table in the kitchen so it's not too far to carry food, or use a wheeled trolley (check whether the person can manage the trolley with food on it).

Make use of low level storage to reduce clutter (put books and magazines in plastic boxes, for example).

Communication

Set up a communication book for visitors to write in so that family and friends get a picture of what has happened during the day. Maybe your friend or family member complained about pain, or a poor night's sleep, or forgot to take their medication. Some people are keen on these books, some aren't. It's worth checking out.



If the person you support has a fall

Often people fall over, remain conscious, and do not require an ambulance. But it's wise to get help if you are unsure. If the person you support has had a fall, and is talking to you coherently, make them as comfortable as possible. If you can, help them to get up. This is better than you trying to lift them up. Perhaps you could push a sturdy armchair over to the person so they can use it to climb upright, or get the person to crawl to a stable piece of furniture. People can often go from all fours to sitting on a chair without standing upright completely.

After a fall, it is worth seeing a GP to establish the reason for the fall. People don't fall over because they are old. A fall can be a sign of infection, or simply that the person tripped on a physical hazard. Think together about ways you can prevent falls in your home. For more ideas, download ACC's *Standing Up To Falls* booklet at www.acc.co.nz.

It's a good idea for you and the person you support to practice how to get up safely after a fall at home.



Look for a sturdy piece of furniture (preferably a chair). Bend your knees up and roll onto your side (a). Push yourself up so you are in a side-sitting position (b). Move into a four-point kneeling position (c). Crawl or drag yourself over to the chair. Put your inside hand on the chair. Then bring your outside leg up ready to push yourself into a kneeling position. Push yourself up with your outside knee and your inside hand on the chair (d). Pivot your bottom around and sit on the chair.



Rest before trying to move. Rest at any time you need to. Rest and try again if you don't succeed getting up the first time.

If you or someone in your family has a fall or is injured, get treatment as soon as possible. Don't wait until you feel better, as this can make an injury worse and your recovery might take longer.

Getting ACC cover is simple: your doctor, physiotherapist, or other treatment provider will submit an ACC claim for you. To learn about making an ACC claim, visit www.acc.co.nz or phone (0800) 303 999.

Strength for Caring

Many family carers receive strains, sprains and other injuries as a result of their caring role. By doing some simple exercises just twice a week, you can quickly strengthen the muscles used for common caring tasks like lifting, transferring, and handling equipment.

Carers NZ and national bodybuilding champion Wayne Halkyard have designed this 10 minute Strength for Caring routine to help you guard against injury ... and feel better overall!



The Strength for Caring programme involves seven basic exercises using a stretchy, inexpensive exercise band or cord. Try this routine just twice a week initially, and do more 'sets' as you get stronger.

"It's hard to believe that 15 minutes of 'resistance training' a few times a week can make a big difference to strength and wellbeing. But I promise that if you give these exercises a try, your strength will improve within three weeks, and you will look and feel better," says Wayne.

Suitable for all ages and fitness levels, the exercises target the body's major muscle groups, and nearly all of the muscles used for weight-bearing, lifting, moving objects, pushing, and rolling... movements familiar to carers supporting someone who needs help to do these things.

Wayne says the exercises will also help carers to relax, easing the muscle tension that can contribute to care-related injuries.

If you have access to the Internet, you can hear Wayne's exercise, wellbeing and nutrition suggestions in upcoming Family Care Radio shows! Tune in 24/7 at www.familycaredio.net.nz

Later in the year, Wayne will feature in Carers NZ's first online 'watch and learn' programme ... see Wayne do these and other exercises at our website, www.carersnz.net.nz

We congratulate Wayne for his recent national bodybuilding victories! He now holds two titles: Masters Mens 40 to 50 Champion for the South Pacific Natural Physiques Association, and the same title for the New Zealand Federation Bodybuilders Association.



Exercise bands and cords are available at retail stores and sport shops. Bands come in different tensions: very stretchy for beginners, to very tight (harder to stretch) for those who exercise regularly and are already quite fit. Costs range from a few dollars for exercise bands to \$40 or more for a high quality cord. Carers NZ has 200 exercise bands for beginners to give away! Request yours by writing to PO Box 133, Mangonui, Far North 0442.

Create a free walking, running or cycling programme at www.activesmart.co.nz/

7 Exercises, 15 Minutes!

Try our easy strength-building programme twice a week ... you'll soon notice a difference.

Do 12 repetitions of each exercise. Face forward and keep your back straight. Tighten your tummy muscles or 'abs' as you start each exercise. Keep movements smooth. After a few weeks you may want to do the programme more often, or complete more 'sets' of the exercises. I've used an exercise cord with handles, but the stretchy bands work just as well.



1. Dead Lift

Breathe in, exhale while standing upright. Keep arms straight. Strengthens the thigh, back, ab and shoulder muscles, used when transferring from low to higher or upright positions.



4. Horizontal Extensions

Keep arms slightly bent. Breathe in, straightening arms out to sides. Keep arms straight, breathing out while returning to original position. Strengthens upper back muscles, rear shoulders and abs; muscles used when pulling weight or objects towards you.



2. Bent Rows

Breathe in, and smoothly pull arms to bent elbow position. Exhale while returning to starting position. Strengthens the back, bicep, shoulder and ab muscles, used when pulling weight towards you.



5. Lateral Raises

Breathe in as you raise cord to shoulder height, keeping arm slightly bent at elbow. Breathe out while returning to starting position. Strengthens the outer shoulder, neck and ab muscles, all used for upward lifting movements.

Swap arms for exercises 5, 6 and 7...

use your weaker side first.



3. Bicep Curls

Breathe in as you pull arms up to bent elbow position. Breathe out while returning to starting position. Strengthens biceps and abs, the muscles used for all lifting and transferring.



6. Front Raises

Breathe in while pulling cord or band to head level. Keep arms slightly bent. Exhale while returning to starting position. Strengthens front shoulders, abs, and forearms; muscles used to transfer weight from lower to higher positions.



7. One Armed Chest Press

Exhale while pushing cord until your arm is straight. Breathe in while returning to starting position. Strengthens the chest, front shoulder, ab and tricep muscles, used for pushing and rolling movements.

There's only one cure for fatigue: Sleep.



Fatigue: Wake up to the danger

Go to www.acc.co.nz/roadsafety for more
information on how to beat fatigue.