

TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS

How Do You Care For Someone With a Disability, Chronic Illness, or Injury?

- **Establish good communications with care providers.** Be sure you and the person you care for understand their medical condition and its implications to the fullest extent possible. With the patient's permission, health professionals can have frank conversations with caregivers about treatment, including prescription drugs. Do not be afraid to seek a second opinion, if desired.
- **Know your options.** Some conditions can be effectively managed and monitored at home, while some require lengthy stays in a hospital or managed care facility. To the fullest extent possible, the person you help should make their own decisions about treatment options, where they live, and which Medicare coverage options they choose. If you are authorized to make decisions on their behalf, you have a special responsibility to ask questions about what outcomes can be expected, and the type and amount of help that will be needed for any treatment options.
- **Take advantage of available counseling and support offered to caregivers.** Many caregivers may feel frustrated and depressed. Support groups and one-on-one counseling can help you deal with your feelings. Many hospitals and treatment facilities offer in-house counseling, and the Administration on Aging's Elder Care Locator Web site at www.eldercare.gov may provide links to local support groups. In addition, many national organizations offer support services for caregivers and their families.
 - Visit the National Cancer Institute at www.cancer.gov and go to the "cancer topics" and "coping with cancer" links.
 - Visit the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org and the "Living With Diabetes" link.
- **Consider respite care.** Getting some relief from day-to-day responsibilities and pressures is critical to maintain your own health and productivity. Respite care services may include help with a specific task or having someone provide care while you take time off. The Access to Respite Care and Help (ARCH) National Respite Network and Resource Center can identify local respite providers at archrespite.org or 1-800-473-1727.

Ask Medicare (www.medicare.gov/caregivers) also offers information on enrolling in Medicare, choosing a prescription drug plan, finding state and local resources to support caregiving tasks, accessing in-home services, and a free e-newsletter with the latest Medicare updates.