



Real Possibilities

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Family caregivers need a plan for taking care of elders while staying safer at home

As cases of the COVID-19 continue to spread across Wisconsin, the nation and the world, health officials have made it clear that older adults and those with chronic health conditions are particularly susceptible to the effects of this dangerous respiratory illness.

Many of our most vulnerable older adults live in communities where diseases can spread quickly, such as nursing homes or assisted living. That's why facilities are temporarily banning visitors in hopes of preventing the transmission of COVID-19 and limiting residents' exposure to anyone who may be infected with the virus.

At the same time, many seniors are at home and could be feeling isolated and anxious about how they can remain healthy and safe.

Currently there are nearly 600,000 unpaid family caregivers across Wisconsin who provide assistance to loved ones at home, and this number will increase with the spread of the virus. That's why it's so important that family caregivers have a plan in place in case they get sick and can't care for those who are relying on them.

At AARP, we believe a caregiving plan should include:

Pull Together a Team. Develop a list of family and friends who can perform caregiving tasks and identify local caregiving services and groups that can deliver essentials such as food or medications.

Inventory Essential Items. Determine how much food, water, medication, and basic supplies the person you're caring for has on hand. We recommend a two-week supply.

Get Medications in Order. Make sure you have a list of medications and medical contacts. If there are upcoming medical appointments, reschedule them or switch to a virtual visit. Having a 30-day supply of essential medications on hand is recommended.

Stay Connected. To combat isolation, set up communication devices and other technology. Encourage people to send cards, letters, magazines, puzzles or other items to a loved one.

Maintain Personal Safety and Self-Care. To be safe and stay healthy, limit contact with visitors, practice social distancing, stay inside as much as you can and continue to wash your hands. While most of us are very focused on the person we are caring for, it is essential to care for yourself.

AARP has a dedicated, toll-free family caregiving line for people taking care of a loved one. Agents are available to take calls M-F, 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. CT at **1-877-333-5885**. You can also find answers online at the AARP Caregiver Resource Center located at www.aarp.org/caregiving.

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