

QUESTIONS?

Do you have any questions about caregiving, seniors' health or long-term care? Send them in and we'll have them answered by the experts. Send your questions to **Solutions**, BCS Communications Ltd., 255 Duncan Mill Road, Suite 803, Toronto, ON, M3B 3H9 or e-mail sarah@bcsgroup.com.

The caregiver is telling me that my father is difficult to care for, but he seems fine when I'm around. What should I do?



Your father may be having some difficulty with a stranger in his home, which may be leading him to appear to be difficult with the caregiver. You should ask your father, when the caregiver is not present, how he is feeling about having the care. He may be more comfortable speaking to you when you are alone. You should also ask the caregiver what he/she means by "difficult." Is it a personality conflict? It may just mean that a change in caregiver is required.

Can I ask my mother's cleaning lady to make lunch for her and do the laundry? Mom lives alone now and I'd like her to have some help.

You could ask your mother's cleaning lady to do those jobs, if she has the time and if your mother is comfortable with



her. That is a start, but if your mother needs any additional assistance you should consider hiring someone else to help her with other things. These might include escorting your mother to medical appointments when you are not available, as well as helping with meals and light housekeeping on the days your mother's cleaning lady is not available.

Uncle Lou keeps losing his dentures and glasses. He is sure that the homecare workers are taking them. I am sure they aren't, but I'm not sure how to handle this situation. Any suggestions?



First off, have you found the dentures and glasses that he keeps losing? Is he misplacing them in his home, or is he actually losing them when he is out in the community? Have you spoken to the homecare workers about your uncle's concerns? If you can discuss this with them, you can encourage them to continue to show your uncle where they are putting his glasses and dentures if they are the ones cleaning them. It is possible that your uncle is having problems with his memory—can you go with him to his doctor to check that out?



What types of products are there for people with arthritis and who can recommend them?

There many different types of products for people with arthritis. These can help with holding on to things, grabbing items and so on. One of the best resources for this type of equipment is a home health store, which will have many of these items on display. These stores have experts on staff who can assist you in choosing the product that is right for you and your needs.

All of a sudden my mother has stopped eating and only wants liquids. What should I do?

Does your mother wear dentures? Has she lost weight recently? Do her dentures still fit her? She may be having pain or discomfort when eating solid foods due to a problem with her teeth. You should take her to her dentist for a check-up. You should also make an



appointment with her physician to ensure there are no medical conditions that may be causing her to stop eating solid foods.



My father and mother like to sleep late, which doesn't work when the morning nurse comes to the house to bathe my mom. Can I ask the agency that is sending her to alter the hours to make things easier for them?

You can always ask for a change in time when you are having someone come to your home. Before accepting any change, find out if you will have the same person as before (if that is your parents' wish). Usually when there is a time change there is a change in caregiver. If you are paying privately, the change should be easy. If the care is government funded, it may be more difficult.

Getting to doctors appointments is difficult for my sister now she is 80. I have to work. Can someone from homecare take her?

Many organizations that provide homecare or companionship also provide assistance in getting to doctors appoint-



ments. These are usually private pay companies as government-funded organizations are not able to provide transportation as part of their funding. The person who helps your sister in going to appointments may also be able to help her remember everything that the doctor has said, providing your sister is comfortable with having that person present during the appointment.

After eight years in a wheelchair my 75-year-old mother has suddenly developed a pressure sore. A nurse came to change her dressing yesterday but I am worried that it might get worse. Mom wears adult briefs and the caregivers don't seem to change her very often. Should I be concerned?



You should absolutely be concerned. Your mother should not suddenly develop a pressure sore if she has been fine for the last eight years. Has her nutrition changed recently? Has she lost weight? Does she need more support or padding in her chair? Has she had a change in caregivers? Is she moving around less than previously? With a pressure sore and wearing adult briefs, caregivers should be changing her frequently to ensure that the sore does not get worse. How often is the nurse changing the dressing? Is the dressing the best one for the pressure sore? Don't be afraid to ask questions of the caregivers. Approach her doctor for advice.



My brother says he doesn't like his new homecare nurse. She's very young and pretty. I wonder if he might be embarrassed in front of her, especially getting dressed and bathing.

Try to be there while she is there. See how she is with him. You should also ask your brother if there is something in particular that he doesn't like about her. Why don't you ask him outright if he is embarrassed in front of her? You might want to ask the agency if a replacement can be found. If there is another person available, possibly a male caregiver, this might make your brother more comfortable.

The bank called to say that my mom hasn't paid her credit card bill in three months. I also notice that she is not eating or changing her clothes regularly. Who can I talk to for advice?

You should work hard at convincing your mother to go to her doctor to see if there is something medical that is wrong, and you should try to go with her. It sounds like she is having difficulty with her memory and may not be remembering to eat or change her clothes. Once you have talked to her doctor, she should be assessed by homecare to see if she is eligible for some assistance in her home. If not, you can contact a homecare agency in her area to see what options are available for privately funded care. ●

ASK THE EXPERTS

Forward your questions or comments to sarah@bcsgroup.com, and we'll ask our experienced nursing team to provide you with the latest advice and information.

