



ASK OUR EXPERTS

QUESTIONS?

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

Mum and her caregiver are constantly fighting about one thing or another. It's not very pleasant. How can I make peace?



The best way to help resolve this conflict is to find the cause of their arguments. Talk to your mother about what is upsetting her and try to get to the root of the problem. If the caregiver is from a reputable agency then you can ask the nursing supervisor to work through the problems. If things can't be resolved, request a replacement caregiver.

Where can I find information about living at home with Alzheimer's disease? My aunt has recently been diagnosed and our family needs to plan her care.

The Alzheimer Society of Canada is an excellent resource for someone in your situation. The society has a lot of infor-



mation on its website and your local chapter may hold education sessions directed at family caregivers. Is your aunt still able to care for herself, prepare her own meals and live independently? As her needs change, she may become eligible for home care support from the government. Alternatively, you could look into finding a caregiver.

Is it normal for someone who has had a stroke to gain weight? Mom has gained 15 pounds and I am worried about the caregivers trying to lift her.



This is not unusual—she is probably not moving around as much as she used to. Qualified caregiving staff will have been trained on how to lift someone without hurting themselves so don't worry about that. If one hasn't been done already, consider asking for an occupational therapy assessment to review the best use of assistive devices. Transfer benches, patient lifts and other mobility supports will make the world of difference to both your mom's activity levels and everyone's safety. You might also want to seek advice from a dietitian or nutritionist.



Rain was leaking into the house the other day and Dad didn't even notice. I wonder what else he might be missing. I live hundreds of miles away. Can I arrange for someone to check on him?

Yes. A nursing agency can arrange for convenient check-ins by phone or in person. With government-funded support, you may be somewhat limited in terms of the times and days they will visit. If you are able to pay directly, however, you can set up convenient appointments for you and your dad.

My parents don't eat well and mom has diabetes. Will a caregiver make nutritious meals?

Yes, a caregiver can make meals, but you will need to make sure the person is familiar with your mother's needs as a



diabetic. If you have a qualified caregiver seven days a week and you can agree on a meal plan, that may be a great solution. If caregiving is only available for a few days or hours a week, Meals on Wheels is an excellent resource to use.



Dining out is hard now that my husband uses a walker. Do you have any tips for us?

If you don't plan ahead, going to a restaurant can be a bit of a challenge. It's best if you call beforehand to ask about accessibility at the doorway, between tables and on the way to the washroom. The restaurant staff will often suggest and reserve an ideal table if you ask in advance.

Dad is very pleasant and grateful to the nurses who care for him and my mother. He wants me to leave tips on his behalf. He isn't short of money, but I am not sure if this is right.

It is not appropriate for nursing staff to receive extra money. It is wonderful that



your dad is happy with the care he and your mother are receiving, but he is putting the nurses in the awkward position of having to refuse the tips. If you want to thank caregivers for their work, write a personal letter or card. Or if your dad really wants to do something tangible, suggest that he makes a donation on their behalf to their favourite charity.

Since he's been on his own, tidying up and laundry are not a priority for Dad. I'm afraid he'll fall over something. How do I make sure he's safe and his home is uncluttered?

Good for you to notice the safety issues before something happens. Most falls occur in the bathroom or other parts of the home and many can be prevented. Tidy up little by little when you visit him. With your mom not around he may, like many older men, not be used to house-keeping routines. If he can afford it, why not suggest hiring a cleaning service to help with the chores and his laundry? The weekly visits may provide companionship as well.



Can having too many cats be a sign of illness? My sister has 22 and seems to be losing control of their care.

Having the cats is not the problem—it's that your sister isn't managing to care for them. Ask yourself if the lack of care for the cats is also transferring into her ability to manage activities of daily living.



Perhaps she is also unable to feed herself properly, maintain her hygiene or dress appropriately for the weather. Watch for these signs. Also consider whether she is under stress. Does she have a history of mental illness? Is she lonely? Ask if you can accompany her on a visit the family doctor. He or she will be able to identify any physical issues and refer your sister to a mental health professional if necessary.

How many hours of care does my dad need? He's 80 years old, lives alone and has trouble cooking his own meals and bathing.

Each person is different in how much care they require. It is best to have an initial assessment done by a qualified person who will be able to help you and your dad to figure out what will work best for him. He may also benefit from going to a day program that allows him to interact with other people during the day. ●



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

