



# I am a Caregiver



THE ONTARIO  
**caregiver**  
ORGANIZATION



## In Ontario there are almost 4 million caregivers, just like you, who provide physical or emotional support to a family member, partner, friend or neighbour.

Many people don't consider themselves a caregiver. Instead, they think of themselves as a family member or friend who is just doing what needs to be done. While most caregivers say they are happy to be able to provide care, many share they are overwhelmed and find it difficult to get the information and support they need. Caregivers are investing more hours in their caregiving role and say they are experiencing increased levels of stress and signs of depression and burnout.

The *I am a Caregiver Toolkit* includes information to support new or long-time caregivers. This information was created by caregivers, for caregivers with input from mental health care professionals and resources. The Ontario Caregiver Organization's website includes helpful information, educational resources, peer support and more. For support finding local programs and information, you can call the 24/7 Caregiver Helpline.

### **The Ontario Caregiver Helpline - 1 833 416 2273**

The Caregiver Helpline is answered by community resource specialists who have been trained by caregivers on the unique needs of caregivers. It's a one-stop resource for information and support for all caregivers living in Ontario. Whether you are looking for respite care in your community, a support group or financial information, the helpline is here to connect you to services. The service is offered in English and French with interpretation services available in 150 languages upon request. The helpline is not a crisis line. This service is also offered by live chat Monday - Friday from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. at [ontariocaregiver.ca](http://ontariocaregiver.ca).

### **Identifying Your Needs**

Caregivers rarely think about their own needs but it's important to find support for yourself, to make your caregiving responsibilities more manageable and to help avoid health issues of your own. To get started, take a few minutes to reflect on the many tasks you manage.

## Step 1: Build Your Circle of Support

Building a circle of support around you is one of the first things you can do for your own health and well being. This could mean asking or accepting help from family members or friends or looking to a professional service for help. Think about the tasks you manage and the resources you currently use. This exercise will give you a better idea of where you may need extra help. To find services in your area, contact the Ontario Caregiver Helpline at 1 833 416 2273 or visit [ontariocaregiver.ca](http://ontariocaregiver.ca).

	Assistance with	I perform this task	When/How often is this done?	Who can help?
<b>Personal Care</b>	Bathing			
	Dressing			
	Eating			
	Foot / mouth care			
	Washroom			
	Lifting / transferring			
	Grooming (shaving, hair care)			
	Medication management			
	Exercise			
	Regular treatment routine			
<b>Help at Home</b>	Housekeeping			
	Laundry			
	Meal planning			
	Meal preparation			
	Gardening / snow shovelling			
	Caring for pets / plants			
	Checking mail			
Sorting recycling / waste disposal				
<b>Transportation/ Shopping</b>	Taking care recipient to activities / appointments			
	Taking care recipient shopping			
	Filling prescriptions			
	Vehicle maintenance			
<b>Care Coordination</b>	Communicating with care and service providers			
<b>Emotional Support</b>	Checking in by phone			
	In-person visits			
	Leisure activities			
<b>Financial/Legal Affairs</b>	Banking, paying bills			
	Legal documents			
	Income tax			
<b>Other</b>				



## Step 2: Reflect on Your Needs

This quiz will help you to reflect on how you're feeling and what you may need to support your own health and well-being. Do you need more information on a topic, a break, or someone to talk to? The Ontario Caregiver Organization's website has free programs and resources that may help including a peer mentor program. Visit [ontariocaregiver.ca](http://ontariocaregiver.ca) for more information.

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
<b>I find it difficult to balance work, family and caregiving responsibilities</b>	0	1	2	3
<b>I have conflicts with my friends, family members or care recipient</b>	0	1	2	3
<b>I worry that I'm not doing a good job as a caregiver</b>	0	1	2	3
<b>I feel guilty</b>	0	1	2	3
<b>I feel anxious</b>	0	1	2	3
<b>I feel sad and cry</b>	0	1	2	3
<b>I have problems with sleep</b>	0	1	2	3
<b>I experience chronic neck or back pain</b>	0	1	2	3
<b>I have tension headaches</b>	0	1	2	3

### Your Score

- 0-10 You are probably managing well. Remember that it's still important to think about ways of preventing stress from building up.
- 11-15 You may need to seek out some additional support. Try to identify the things that are causing you stress - you may not be able to change all of them but there may be areas where you can ask for help or make changes to relieve some of your stress.
- 16-19 You may be experiencing caregiver distress and your responsibilities may already be taking a toll on your physical and emotional wellbeing. It is important that you talk to your doctor or healthcare professional, a family member, friend, or join a support group to help reduce your level of distress.
- 20+ You may be experiencing caregiver burnout. To protect your own health it is important that you talk to your family doctor or healthcare professional about your stress. You may also want to talk with family or friends or join a support group.

Consider the tasks you manage, as well as your quiz score.

For more information on the free programs and services available to caregivers visit [ontariocaregiver.ca](http://ontariocaregiver.ca)

*This quiz has been re-printed with permission from Caregivers Nova Scotia.*

## Step 3: Care for Yourself

Caregiver distress is on the rise. While it may be hard, it's important to care for yourself. Speak with a doctor if you're experiencing:

- Exhaustion and lack of energy
- Feelings of guilt and being overwhelmed
- Feeling anxious or unwell
- Neglecting own needs
- Difficulty relaxing even when help is available
- Impatience and irritability
- Changes in sleeping and eating patterns and/or excessive use of alcohol, cannabis, and/or prescription medications





# Thank You Caregivers

-  we see you
-  we hear you and
-  we are here to help



## Free Caregiver Programs and Services

These free programs and services are available to Ontario Caregivers.



### 24/7 Helpline (1-833-416-2273)

The Ontario Caregiver Helpline is a one-stop resource for information and referrals connecting caregivers to the support you need. This might include respite, a support group in your community or programs for the person you care for.

The Helpline is answered by professional Community Resource Specialists in English and French. Interpretation services are available in 150 languages upon request. Helpline Specialists are trained to understand the unique needs of caregivers.

The Ontario Caregiver Helpline is not a crisis or counselling line. If you are in crisis and need immediate assistance, please call 911.



### Helpful Webinars (Live and Recorded)

The Ontario Caregiver Organization hosts live one-hour webinars presented by subject matter experts on a variety of timely and important topics for caregivers. Please browse the [Webinar Library](#) on the website which includes our past recorded webinars as well as webinar notes containing related resources for caregivers. Search webinars by keyword or browse by categories.

To register for upcoming webinars, please click on our [Events page](#), or check out our [Eventbrite page](#) to follow OCO upcoming events and register directly.

*"I feel grateful and less anxious after attending webinars."* - Caregiver





## Free Caregiver Programs and Services continued



### 1:1 Peer Support (online or by phone)

Together with experienced caregivers, we created the 1:1 Peer Support Program. In three simple steps, you can connect with another caregiver, share your experiences and receive the direct support that you need as you navigate this journey, together.



### Online Support Groups

Join our Online Support Groups and connect with other caregivers in a supportive environment to share your challenges, successes, and concerns.



### The SCALE Program

(Supporting Caregiver Awareness, Learning and Empowerment) aims to empower caregivers with practical information and skills to focus on their own mental health and well-being needs by offering weekly webinars, strategies/tools, online group/individual counselling.



### Caregiver Coaching Program

Caregiver Coaching is a professional one-to-one relationship between a Coach and a family caregiver. The Coach can give you the tools you need to meet your current challenges and responsibilities of caring for others while also caring for yourself.







## Online Learning Library

The OCO Online Learning Library is a platform used for teaching and learning caregiver-related information through online eLearning modules and courses. Courses such as Caregiver 101 can be done at your own pace and accessed through your phone, tablet or computer. Program leaders can answer course related questions by email to assist with learning.



## 90Second Caregiver

Many caregivers experience burn out, depression, isolation and loneliness.

An easy first step to making your wellness a priority is registering for the free, weekly *90Second Caregiver* health letter. The *90Second Caregiver* is a free, short, evidence-based, health letter delivered each week to your inbox. The letter includes health information, tips, and advice related to the caregiving experience.

*"I find them acknowledging and helpful. I like that they are short & to the point but meaningful."* - Caregiver



## Free Caregiver Programs and Services continued



### Time to Talk Podcast

OCO's Time to Talk Podcast returns for another exciting season. Join our host Michelle Jobin along with subject matter experts and caregivers to discuss things that matter most, including mental health, wellness and many more.

Whether you are new to caregiving, or an experienced caregiver, this podcast has something for you.



### Dedicated Resource for Young Caregivers:

[youngcaregiversconnect.ca](http://youngcaregiversconnect.ca)

There are over 500,000 young caregivers in Ontario. Young Caregivers provide emotional support, personal care, medical care, and help around the house, like cooking, babysitting and cleaning. If this sounds like you, you are not alone.

YoungCaregiversConnect.ca is an online resource for young caregivers, created with young caregivers. Browse useful information and join our online discussion forum to connect with others like you today.

*"Thank you for providing me such a positive environment to share and connect with [other] young caregivers like us." - Young Caregiver*





*"It meant the world to me to have this kind of support while going through the caregiving experience, which can be very lonely and isolating at times. Thank you for being there for me."*

- Caregiver





Ontario Caregiver Helpline: 1-833-416-2273

Email: [info@ontariocaregiver.ca](mailto:info@ontariocaregiver.ca)  
Phone: 416-362-CARE (2273) or 1-888-877-1626

[www.ontariocaregiver.ca](http://www.ontariocaregiver.ca)

