

*This document is a compilation of extracts from the 'Caring for YOU!' series of magazines for caregivers. Our thanks to AbbVie for permission to share this content.*

---

## Staying healthy

### Looking after yourself

Staying healthy is the best thing you can do to ensure you can continue to offer your loved one good quality care.

Staying in good mental and physical health is vital for everyone, but it's particularly key if you're responsible for the health and welfare of someone else as well.<sup>1</sup>

After all, if you get sick, you won't be able to keep providing the excellent support you do at the moment.

'People often don't think about the person whose job is being a carer,' says Marie Lenstrup, the National Chair of Carers Denmark.

'This can be frustrating for you, but it's important to make looking after your own health a priority so that you can take care of your loved one properly.

'It's also important to communicate this to your friends and family so they can help you out where necessary, to ensure you're giving your body and your mind enough rest.'

### What you can do

These are the things you need to think about to help safeguard your overall health and wellbeing.

### Your physical health<sup>1,5</sup>

Eating well, staying active with regular exercise, and getting good quality sleep can all help you to keep your body as healthy as possible and so ward off fatigue and illness. Unfortunately our bodies don't take care of themselves. As with managing Parkinson's disease day-to-day, it can help to introduce some routines for yourself. For example, you might need to think more about eating a balanced diet, setting time aside for exercise, and sticking to regular sleeping patterns. Doing this will help make sure that you're keeping yourself at your best.

### Your emotional wellbeing

Caring for another person can take an emotional toll. You need to be able to manage stress and find ways to cope with the various challenges that caring for someone can bring. Feeling unhappy, depressed or anxious are normal emotions experienced by

carers. Learning to identify and manage these can make a big difference to your day-to-day life.<sup>3,4</sup>

### **Your social life and relationships**

Caring is a full-time job – in fact, the 24/7 nature of it makes it much more intensive than a regular full-time job. This can also make it a lonely thing to deal with, as you spend hours at home with your loved one and social contact outside the home is reduced. That's why staying in touch with friends and family and having your own life away from caring is so important.<sup>3</sup>

#### References:

- 1 EPDA. Health and Fitness. In, Vol. 2015.
- 3 Eurocarers. Carers in Europe Factsheet. In.
- 4 Narum LT, N. Caregiver Stress & Coping: The Journey Through Caregiving. In: (Project NDFC, ed): North Dakota State University. 2003.
- 5 WHO. WHO technical meeting on sleep and health In. 2004.