

WE CARE

The best way to manage an emergency is to prepare for one. We hope that these tips discussed here are useful in your planning process. If you would like to discuss these issues further, please call the Care2Caregivers helpline. Our dedicated, professional staff members, who have also been family caregivers, are here to listen and guide you.



WHEN YOU CARE • WE ARE THERE

For more information:

Comprehensive Services on Aging (COPSA) has been providing compassionate and sensitive mental health care to the elderly since 1975. A team of Geriatric Psychiatrists, Social Workers and Case Managers are available to assist families with diagnosis and treatment. COPSA also provides training for professionals, family caregivers and the community on issues related to aging, memory and mental health. Care2Caregivers provides resources, referrals, information and supportive counseling to anyone caring for someone with memory loss. Call for help.

HELPLINE: 800.424.2494

RUTGERS HEALTH

University Behavioral Health Care
COPSA Institute for Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders

More items to consider for a good **EMERGENCY CARE PLAN:**

Consider applying for a bed in a nursing home, just in case you become unable to care for your loved one and family members or friends are unable to provide the required level of care. It is never too early to start looking for a facility that can provide care on a respite or emergency basis. When things are calm, take the time to visit a few facilities, talk to friends and neighbors who may have recommendations, then apply. The application fees are typically nominal. You are not obligated to ever sign up, but having this safety net in place can ease worries.

Write up a life history including key facts about your loved one's life experiences that can be shared with care workers. Include a brief history of where they lived as a child, favorite places they visited, what they did for a living, hobbies, favorite music and their proudest moments. This can be especially helpful if they are going to a long-term care facility. Be sure to include anything that is working for you now. For instance, when your mom gets anxious at home, you find that putting on music really calms her down. Or when your husband gets tearful looking for his parents you can distract him with looking at pictures. Include tips for things like preferred meal time, favorite foods, topics to avoid talking about, etc.

Have an updated list of daily schedules with tips on interacting with your loved one, including activities they enjoy. Do you find getting them to take a bath goes better when you try in the morning? Does she need to nap in the afternoon when she comes home from day care? When he wakes up in the middle of the night and wants to go to work, can you get him to go back to bed by telling him that his boss called and said the office is opening late today? Does she enjoy walking around the block? Are there certain TV shows that he seems to enjoy?

Make sure that financial and official documentation is in order and accessible, including a list of assets, bank account information, insurance policies, titles and deeds to property, vehicle information, utility company numbers, security passcodes, keys, and safe deposit box locations. Consider sharing this information with your Power of Attorney now. It is a good idea for them to have a hard copy in a safe place, just in case you have to leave your home quickly and don't have time to retrieve papers.

Make plans for automatic bill pay and direct deposits. Setting this up now can also save you time considering the increased demands of caregiving.

Share your contingency plans with appropriate family and friends. You can send copies in the mail or electronically. Many families find it helpful to set aside a special time to sit down together to review the documents and discuss the emergency plan.



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EMERGENCY CARE **PLANNING**

**Are you prepared
for all of the
'what ifs'?**



Caregivers work tirelessly to care for their loved ones with memory loss. It is important to stop and think about what would happen if there was an **emergency** that could impact you or your loved one.

Having a plan in place can bring peace of mind and help you cope with unforeseen circumstances. Many caregivers report lying awake at night worrying about all of the 'what ifs'. Planning now for what to do in the event

of an emergency can help you get a better night's sleep now and increase your ability to safely navigate the unexpected.

Emergencies come in many forms and when we least expect them.

Emergencies can happen to caregivers, to families, and to the person with memory loss. If you are the primary caregiver, what would happen if you suddenly became ill? Who would take on your caregiving responsibilities while you recuperate? Chances are if you are sick, someone may need to oversee your care as well as the care for your loved one. What would happen if there was a flood or other emergency and you needed to evacuate your home? Where would you go? What would you bring? Dealing with dementia is a challenging task on a normal day. Changes in routines, caregivers and environments can cause even greater stress for everyone. Planning ahead can help you better manage the unexpected.



Items to consider for a good **EMERGENCY CARE PLAN:**

Create a chain of command.

Identify people who can step in immediately to provide assistance, supervision and care. Multiple people may be needed at the same time. For instance, if you are the well spouse and you need to be hospitalized, you may need someone to oversee your medical treatment as well as someone to care for your spouse.

Arrange for health information, including history, current medications, allergies, medical provider's names and phone numbers, and copies of insurance cards for yourself and your loved one to be readily available.

Those designated to provide assistance should have copies of these documents, know where they are stored, and have access to them. If they are locked in a safe, make sure you share the combination or key.

Legal documents should be in order, including Durable Power of Attorney, Health Proxy, Last Will and Testament, etc. Documents should be for YOU and your loved one.

Advance Care Plans should be documented for yourself and your loved one, including DNR (Do Not Resuscitate), Health Care Proxy, and

Anatomical Gift and Organ Donation wishes. It is best to make your wishes known in advance to help guide your loved ones during a time of crisis.

Burial plans and wishes for yourself and your loved one should be arranged and shared. Many families report being grateful when final resting plans have been arranged prior to death. It is one less thing to worry about during a very stressful time.

In the event that you must evacuate your residence, it is important to know your options for temporary and longer-term shelter. You should determine in advance where you can go for immediate assistance. Perhaps there is a neighbor who could shelter you in the middle of the night. You should also know where you could stay for an extended period of time if you had to leave your town or state in the event of a natural disaster.

An emergency bag should be packed with copies of important documents, phone charger, special supplies (incontinency items), etc.

Remember to update the information periodically, as medications can frequently change. Check that the clothes in the bag are still the appropriate size for your loved one, as people often lose or gain weight as the disease progresses.



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ubhc.rutgers.edu/services/geriatric
www.Care2Caregivers.com