

Caring for the Caregiver

Care for the caregiver is a critical intervention in dementia care. Caregivers offer essential reports about the cognitively impaired care recipient, and caregiver well-being is a predictor of how long individuals with dementia are able to live in the community before moving to a long-term care facility.

Caregiver statistics at a glance:

- Fewer than half of dementia caregivers report ever having a clinician ask them what they need to care for their loved one
- Only a quarter of dementia caregivers report a clinician ever asking them about their own self-care needs¹
- More than half of dementia caregivers say they need more help managing their own emotional and physical stress

THERE ARE 4 STEPS THAT ANY CLINICIAN IN ANY SETTING CAN TAKE TO SUPPORT CAREGIVERS:

1. Include caregivers as a member of the care team by identifying who they are, including them in appointments and conversations with the patient, and documenting their information in the patient's medical record.
2. Assess the caregiver's health, well-being, capacity and willingness to be a caregiver, and any unmet needs.
3. Create care plans for both patient and caregiver that are matched to their needs and reflect goals of care and advance care planning.
4. Address caregiver needs via referral to appropriate services, including medical consultation, disease education resources, and online and community resources.

If caregiver needs are unmet, chances are much higher that your patient's needs will be unmet as well. Caregiver assessment may be conducted by a range of health professionals, including physicians, nurses, social workers, or care managers.

The following are validated assessment tools and resources for assessing caregiver well-being. Take CAPC's course [Supporting the Caregivers of People Living with Dementia](#) to learn more.

¹ National Alliance for Caregiving, "Dementia Caregiving in the U.S.," 2017.

Caregiver Assessment Tools

Zarit Burden Interview (ZBI)	Assesses distress, perceptions of social and physical health, and financial and emotional burden; providers can also use the short-form version
Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS)	Short-form version (15 questions) screens for depression in the elderly population
Benjamin Rose Institute Caregiver Strain Instrument	Assesses caregiver feelings about caregiving, relationship strain, health, and social isolation
Caregiver Self-Assessment Questionnaire	Developed by the American Medical Association, caregivers indicate specific episodes of physical and emotional strain
"What Do I Need as a Family Caregiver?"	Developed by Next Step in Care , asks caregivers about their living situation, caregiving responsibilities, worries, and sources of support
REACH II Risk Appraisal (RAM)	Developed and validated by REACH II data, identifies risk for depression, social support, and safety

After assessing the needs of both the person living with dementia and their caregiver(s), the next step is matching services to identified needs and providing referrals to community-based support services. See the Referral to Community Resources handout for suggested sources of support.