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Tips for Caregivers: Communicating with Older Adults About Their Health

Because older adults may have several complicated medical conditions, caring for and providing assistance to them may be difficult. Caregivers should have skills to support complicated medical conditions and take advantage of opportunities to help older adults with health information. The term caregiver refers to anyone who provides assistance to an older adult.

Older adults often face complex health decisions that involve trade-offs among options. They might choose an option that most appeals to their values and beliefs.

There are two types of caregivers: informal and formal. Informal caregivers are unpaid individuals such as neighbors, family members or friends who provide care. Formal caregivers are paid employees or volunteers from a service provider who provide care in a formal setting, such as a nursing home or assisted living facility. Caregivers can influence health decisions older adults make or decisions about older adults that other people make.

Here are a few tips caregivers can use to help older adults make decisions about their health. Share these tips with caregivers.

- Provide step-by-step instructions, illustrated if possible, for medication and/or medical purposes.
- Provide internet sites that have reliable health information for or about older adults, such as [CDC's Healthy Aging](#) web pages.
- Provide a large-print list of important telephone numbers, such as emergency numbers, local pharmacies, and medical providers.
- Help prepare a list of [key questions](#) for the next medical and dental visits and encourage older adults to ask questions.
- Contact your local area agency on aging or call the Administration on Aging Eldercare Locator toll free number at 1-800-677-1116 to find local services, programs, and resources.

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Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

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