

10 Health tips for carers

Many carers will see themselves as supporting a loved one and will not think of themselves as being a carer. 1 in 8 adults provide unpaid care for family and friends, whether round-the-clock or for a few hours a week. Caring is important but it can be tough. At West Berkshire Council we are committed to recognising the vital role that carers have and to ensuring they receive the right level of support they need to continue to care. This leaflet provides information about how to look after your own wellbeing.

1. Get information and advice



An "Information for carers" booklet has been produced by the council. It provides details of many organisations who can provide support and advice for both you and the person you care for. Request a hard copy by contacting Adult Social Care **01635 503050** or email adultcare@westberks.gov.uk or download here: www.westberks.gov.uk/carerssupport

You can also have a free carer's assessment so that you can discuss your needs with West Berkshire Council. In the assessment, you can explain what caring tasks you do (e.g. washing, dressing, medication) and how it affects your life (e.g. relationships). The assessment helps work out what can be done to make life easier for you.

Find out more here: www.westberks.gov.uk/carerssupport or phone Adult Social Care on Tel: **01635 503050**. The West Berkshire Directory is a good source of information on local groups, activities and support services: <https://directory.westberks.gov.uk>

2. Ask others to help



Try talking to your family and friends and asking for a small amount of help – with shopping or staying with the person you look after for a short time to allow you to pop out. Your local Carers' Partnership (Age UK Berkshire and CommuniCare) provides confidential information, advice and guidance to carers. They can give one-to-one telephone support, they have carers groups, can advise about Carers grants and respite breaks. They also provide access to carers support groups and peer support, which is valuable if you are feeling isolated.

Visit: <https://carerspartnership.org.uk/> or contact via email: info@ageukberkshire.org.uk or Tel: **0118 959 4242**

3. Talk to your GP



Don't leave your health to get worse before you seek help. It is important to let your GP know you are a Carer so they can understand the responsibilities you have. If your caring role prevents you from attending medical appointments then do ask for help (e.g. family, friends, GP, carers Partnership) or take the person you are caring for with you if they can't be left unattended. Read more here: www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/patient-information/faqs/supporting-carers/

4. Make sure you get a break



Although it can be difficult to find time, it's important that you get a break from caring. Even if you do not want a break at this time it's good to know what is available and how to arrange a planned or 'emergency' break. Whether it's a few hours, or a day or a week or two most carers need a break. For advice on your options, visit: www.westberks.gov.uk/carerssupport or contact Adult Social Care at West Berkshire Council via email: adultcare@westberks.gov.uk or Tel: **01635 503050**.



5. Check if you qualify for any benefits



Caring can affect your finances, especially if you need to give up work or reduce hours. Unpaid Carers who are on low incomes may be entitled to benefits (e.g. Carer's Allowance).

Visit: www.carerspartnership.org.uk or contact via email: info@ageukberkshire.org.uk or Tel: 0118 959 4242. Newbury Jobcentre Plus Tel: 0800 169 0190 or Citizens Advice West Berkshire, Tel: 01635 516605. Further information is also available on www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/help-for-carers Also look out for carers discounts; www.ceacard.co.uk/ and <https://carers.org/grants-and-discounts/carersmart-discount-club>

6. Take care of your physical health



Always take care of your own health and wellbeing needs. It's important for you and also helps the person you care for. Don't leave your health to get worse before you seek help. Let your GP know that you have caring responsibilities so they can offer you tailored advice and support. You are entitled to a free flu jab every year. For more details visit: www.nhs.uk/better-health/ or speak to your GP or Carers Partnership www.carerspartnership.org.uk or Tel: 0118 959 4242.

7. Seek help if you are feeling low, anxious or stressed



Caring can affect your mental health, it can be positive and rewarding but also difficult and upsetting. Many Carers get stressed, depressed or feel anxious. Try and speak to someone you trust about how you're feeling (e.g. friends, family members or your GP). The NHS Every Mind Matters website also has helpful information: www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/

You can also self-refer to a range of sources of support, for more details visit: www.westberks.gov.uk/mentalhealthsupport Carers UK provides free online wellbeing courses: <https://carersdigital.org/wellbeing/>

Recovery in Mind provides free courses that are suitable for carers. Visit their website for more information; <https://recoveryinmind.org>

8. Eat Well



Shopping, meal planning and preparation are important for good nutrition and a healthy daily routine. Have fresh fruit and nuts available for quick snacks, eat regular meals, and don't postpone meals. For more details about healthy eating visit; www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/

9. Manage any sleep problems



When you're caring for someone you may need to see to their needs during the night making it harder to get enough sleep. Sleep problems can affect your energy and concentration levels making it difficult to carry out your caring role. Your sleep can be improved by; changing lighting levels, exercising, avoiding alcohol and caffeine or by doing something calming to relax before bed. Speak to your GP if you have trouble sleeping or the NHS has some tips on better sleep: www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-health-issues/sleep/

10. Take regular exercise



Research has shown that regular physical activity can improve mood, self-esteem and quality of sleep. Having good physical fitness, strength and flexibility reduces the risk of physical injury and fatigue from the demands of caring. Get Berkshire Active have some useful tips on how to be active at home: <https://getberkshireactive.org/active-at-home>

The West Berkshire Directory also has some information about local groups. The West Berkshire card is a free way to gain discounts in the council sports and leisure centres, visit this website for more information: www.westberks.gov.uk/west-berkshire-card