



Looking for a Caregiver Tips

What is Caregiving?

When to start considering a caregiver?

When a loved one needs assistance with personal care or there are concerns about them staying safe alone at home, it may be time to start looking into homecare options. Changes may be subtle or obvious such as:

- Decline in personal hygiene, or household cleanliness
- Forgetfulness about where belongings are, paying bills, a pot on the stove, taking medications, etc.
- New health conditions making self-care more difficult, or changes in mobility

What does caregiving include?

The needs of your loved one may fit in just one of these areas, or they may need assistance in multiple ways across these areas.

Personal care: Bathing, eating, dressing, toileting, personal grooming

Household care: Cooking, cleaning, laundry, grocery shopping, yard work

Health care: Managing and reminding about medications, doctor's appointments, physical therapy, exercise

Emotional care: Companionship, meaningful activities, conversation, socialisation, recreational activities

The types of care that your loved one needs can change and develop over time, and they may begin to need help in areas where they didn't before.

What are the different types of caregivers?

Caregivers may be unpaid such as family and friends helping out, or when more assistance is needed some families may choose to hire paid caregivers.

The Ageing and Disability (ADS) home care providers Registry has 3 types of caregivers:

- Personal caregiver or family caregiver
- Skilled caregiver
- Nurse, registered (RN) or enrolled (EN)

What's the purpose of the ADS home care provider registry?

The purpose is to create a vetting process of home care providers for the government payers to reimburse care providers of good standing, and thereby protect vulnerable persons of the public who may need home care services.

Who are the government payers?

The government payers [Health Insurance Department](#), [HIP and FutureCare plans](#), [Dept. of Financial Assistance](#) and [Dept. of Social Insurance for War Veterans](#) provide home care benefits on behalf of their clients.

What's the difference in the types of caregivers?

Personal caregivers are persons interested in assisting others but may not have any formal training. Dementia training is recommended for those caring for persons or family with dementia.

Personal Caregivers may provide:

- Companionship by engaging in conversation, and recreational activities
- Prompting, cueing or minimal hands-on assistance with bathing, dressing, grooming, toileting, eating, and walking for non-frail and non-medically complex persons
- Changing bed linens, putting out trash, light housekeeping
- Meal preparation and clean up
- Transportation

Skilled Caregivers are **nursing associates**, or geriatric aides registered with the Bermuda Nursing Council which requires completion of an approved educational training program.

Skilled Caregivers may perform personal caregiving tasks as well as:

- Hands on care for frail or bedridden for bathing, dressing, toileting, and mobility assistance such as transfers from chair to bed
- Assist in monitoring for changes in health conditions
- May provide dressing changes to simple wounds but not complex

Nurses, RN or EN, are professionally trained nurses registered with the Bermuda Nursing Council who may provide:

- Care needs assessments ,care planning
- Assessing and monitoring of health conditions
- Preparation and administration of medications
- Medical or nursing treatments
- Supervision of other caregivers

Only **nurses (RN or EN) registered** with the Bermuda Nursing Council can prepare or administer medications. Skilled caregivers or Nursing Associates may assist the care recipient in following a medication schedule when medication are ready to take in clearly labelled premeasured doses such as blister packs, or weekly pill organizers.

How would I Find a Caregiver?

Where to start?

Talk with friends or family to see if they know someone they would recommend.

Go to the [caregiver directory](#) to search for one with the features you are looking for.

Points to consider -

When hiring from a homecare agency:

- Ask the agency if they have any screening or required credentials for caregiving staff
- Backup care is more easily available if the caregiver is sick
- Concerns and complaints may be handled by a supervisor at the agency
- Much of the paperwork for hiring, scheduling and payment is taken care of by the agency.
- You will need to manage your own accounting to determine co-pays not covered by insurance.
- Tend to be a more expensive option
- There tends to be less flexibility about the hours a caregiver will work
- Less choice on which specific caregiver you receive

When hiring a self-employed homecare provider:

- You may need to find, check references and determine what credentials you may want with the caregiver
- You may need to organize backup care yourself if necessary
- You need to bring up complaints or concerns directly with the caregiver
- You are in charge of much of the hiring, scheduling, accounting, co-payments payment and the paperwork included, such as taxes or social insurance, depending on your caregiver agreement
- Tend to be a more affordable option
- More ability to negotiate about what times care is needed and for how long
- You have total control on who you hire, and if the caregiver is a good fit for you and your loved one

How would I interview a potential caregiver?

You may start with a phone interview, but you should also meet the caregiver in person, and, have them meet your loved one as well.

Examples of some good questions to ask a potential caregiver are:

- What previous experience do you have as a caregiver, and what was that like?
- What specialized training do you have?
- Can you describe a typical day on the job with your last client?
- Have you ever spotted a medical problem in a client before the doctor or family has noticed? Tell me about that situation.
- What are your favorite and least favorite aspects of being a caregiver?

Make some observations-

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- Does the caregiver interact with you and your loved one in a respectful and calm manner?
- Does your loved one seem at ease and comfortable?
- Is there easy flow of conversation between you all? You want the personality and communication style to match for best success.
- Describe and give detail the requirements and responsibilities you are expecting from a caregiver to be sure you and the caregiver have the same expectations .

Find more of the potential requirements and responsibilities on the [Sample Client and Home Care Provider Agreement](#)

How do I screen a potential caregiver?

Caregivers or home care agencies that are registered with the ADS home care providers registry -posted on the Helping Services Looking for a Caregiver page have had criminal record checks, and have met minimal requirements depending on the type of caregiver. See Home Care Provider FAQs for more details.

Should I ask for references?

Yes and check them, even if a good friend is recommending someone. Ask questions such as:

- Was the caregiver caring and respectful?
- Did the care meet the care recipient's needs and expectations?
- Was the caregiver timely and clear in communicating any health or behaviour changes or concerns to family or physician?
- Was the caregiver reliable in coming when scheduled?
- Did you have any concerns about your loved ones' safety or belongings?

Should I have a trial period?

It is a good idea to have a short try out period to make sure that they are a good fit for you and your loved one. During this time it can be useful to drop by at least a few times unannounced, so that you can verify that the caregiver is doing everything they said they would, and things are going well.

Planning Home Care

Planning ahead – why talk about Home Care?

- Ideally, the conversation about home care will begin with your loved one before they need this type of help.
- Keep it simple and expect to have a series of discussions.
- Make it more about you and your worry, not about blaming or berating them of the things your loved one isn't doing.

How do I tell my loved one I think they need home care?

- It can be helpful to remind them that you only want what is best for them, and that *you* would worry less if they had someone helping them out at home some of the time
- Ask your loved one about what things they would like additional assistance with, and what are for their preferences in a caregiver
- If you already provide them with some assistance, ask what tasks they would be comfortable with a caregiver taking over

How do I bring up home care with other family members?

- Involve other family members in the discussion about looking for homecare for your loved one
- During the discussion, explain why you think this step is necessary, and ask for their opinions
 - Allowing everyone to speak and have their opinions heard is an important part of making everyone feel included, and moving forward as a team to support your loved one in their care
- Encourage a team approach, sharing the tasks, and support each emotionally
- Decide on a team leader to keep the agenda/conversations on track
 - Being the lead in this discussion can be difficult, but having someone take that role is important in making sure that meaningful progress is made
- Though this conversation and process may be difficult or tense at times, it is important to remember that everyone wants what is best for your loved one and is coming from a place of care and concern

How can family members be involved in the care process?

Once you've determined who will be involved in this care process, assigning tasks and responsibilities for each person can be useful in helping everyone feel involved in the process, as well as making sure one person isn't overwhelmed by trying to organise everything.

Some tasks that can be divided up are:

- Making sure necessary bills are being paid
- Determine who will make health care decisions if your loved one becomes unable to?
 - More information about this process and advanced directives can be found [here](#)
- Household work and maintenance
- Yard work
- Personal care

What is a care agreement and why is it important?

- A care agreement is a written plan of care between the client and carer, to detail what tasks or duties the carer should provide, how much support is needed, and how often it should happen.
- The care agreement should include your loved ones' preferences, and input from health care professionals if needed. It can also outline when and how the carer should communicate if problems arise.
- A [sample care agreement](#) is available to download which can be a useful starting point.
- There are lots of good resources available online that can help with planning care for your loved one. More information about long term care can be found [here](#) .

Managing a Caregiver

How do I check in on a caregiver?

- Schedule regular chats or meetings to see how things are going, and discuss problems or changes.
 - As care needs change, work with the caregiver to update the care agreement with the new responsibilities of the caregiver.
- Drop by unannounced for quick visits, so you can see how the day to day care is carried out
- Ask the caregiver to write a daily log that briefly explains what they did and how they spent the day. They can also make notes of any problems, concerns, or questions they have for you.
- Keep cash, bank cards, important documents and valuables locked away. If some cash is needed keep only a small amount on hand, and require the caregiver to keep a log of all expenses and provide itemized receipts.
- Show gratitude for their involvement in caring for your loved one, to let them know that their hard work is appreciated
- Bring up concerns with the caregiver in a calm, non-confrontational discussion. Explain your perspective and allow them to do the same.
- Seek guidance from health or social care professionals, Ageing and Disability services if not sure how to proceed.

How do I manage paying a caregiver?

It is important to review the billing of the care services provided for your loved one. Make sure you are provided with the following documents:

- Caregiver submits a bill that includes the total cost of services for that time period
- Any reimbursement forms from insurance or social benefits
- The remaining co-pay balance that you must pay

What are some warning signs of abuse?

Those needing home care tend to be some of the most vulnerable members of our population, and unfortunately this makes them at risk for exploitation and abuse. For this reason, it is important to regularly check up on your loved one, and to watch out for warning signs of physical or mental abuse, and financial exploitation.

Some potential red flags include:

- The caregiver isolating your loved one from family and friends
- The caregiver does all the talking when you ask your loved one about how their day or the care process is going
- The caregiver is making decisions for your loved one that they are capable of doing themselves
- Your loved one's personality has changed since the caregiver was hired, or they appear to be afraid
- Your loved one has unexplained weight loss, or a suspicious amount of bruises or other injuries

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- Cheques or money are missing from your loved one's belongings
- The caregiver has asked for advanced payments or a blank check

If you suspect your loved one might be the victim of neglect or abuse, please contact [Aging and Disability Services](#) for assistance.