

Caregiver Burnout

Caring for a loved one at home can be a rewarding experience. When caregivers don't pay attention to their own wellbeing, they can often end up faced with physical, mental and emotional challenges themselves.



As an example, when a caregiver is focused on taking care of a spouse or parent at home while waiting to get into a long-term care home, their role is often a daily struggle. Often long-term care placement takes longer than expected. It can be frustrating especially if the person being cared for suffers a stroke or other serious health issue which adds another layer of difficulty in caring for the patient at home.

As a family physician, I know that everyone wants to make sure their loved one is going to get the best care – the kind provided by a family member or friend. The expectation often held by those who need home and community care is that HNHBC CCAC can provide everything they want. The reality is, CCAC doesn't provide 24/7 care and support.

Through care coordination between the patient, their family, doctor and CCAC care teams, the focus is to make sure patients get the care they need to remain living at home safely and comfortably. In many cases, there comes a time when a patient may need more than what can be provided in the home. This is when considering other care options becomes critical.

For adult children caring for a parent, it's common for them to feel an enormous amount of guilt when anxiety sets in and they begin to burn out. It's especially difficult on people who are part of the "Sandwich Generation" – parents raising teenagers or young children while trying to care for parents who may be ill or living with a number of complex health issues.

I often try to explain to adult children caregivers that managing their own self-care will put them in a much better position to care for their parent or spouse. Getting enough rest, eating right and taking at least some time each day to focus on their own needs, can help caregivers put everything in the right perspective. Ultimately, this will help them provide even better care and make the right decisions for their loved ones.

The bottom line is this: Taking care of yourself as a caregiver is not selfish – it's actually selfless. Your family will benefit from you being at your best, so take time for yourself and stay healthy!

Dr. Barbara Teal – Medical Director and Primary Care Lead, HNHBC CCAC

To support you in your role as a caregiver, you may wish to speak with your family physician or **Community Care Access Centre (CCAC)** care coordinator. Individuals may also call the CCAC 8:30 am – 8:30 pm (7 days a week) by calling **1-800-810-0000** or visit www.healthcareathome.ca/hnhb