



Heart in Hand

# Elderly Care Essentials

A guide to help informal caregivers  
in supporting their elderly loved ones





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Welcome to Heart in Hand's Elderly Care Essentials – **your companion in supporting the health, comfort, and dignity of your elderly loved ones.** Whether you're a family member, guardian, or caregiver, this guide is designed to provide reliable information, practical caregiving strategies, and tools to help you stay organized throughout your caregiving journey.

Inside, you'll find clear explanations of common physical, cognitive, and emotional changes that come with aging, along with daily care essentials such as hygiene, nutrition, mobility, and rest. You'll also discover health monitoring tips, safety and emergency guidelines, and templates for keeping track of medications, routines, and medical records. Each section is created to help you better understand your loved one's needs and build daily routines that support their well-being in a safe, nurturing home environment.

Caregiving for the elderly comes with both meaningful moments and real challenges. This guidebook is here to make that journey a little easier – offering knowledge, structure, and encouragement every step of the way!

# Understanding Aging and the Elderly

As our loved ones grow older, their bodies, minds, and social worlds change. Understanding these changes helps you respond with empathy and knowledge.

## A ■ Physical Changes

- Mobility and strength decline: walking may become slower or unsteady, increasing the risk of falls.
- Sensory changes: hearing loss, weaker eyesight, reduced taste and smell.
- Health conditions: hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, and other chronic illnesses are common.
- Skin and immune system: skin becomes thinner and heals more slowly; immunity weakens.



**Caregiver Tip:** Encourage light daily activity, assist with mobility safely, and bring elders to regular check-ups for monitoring.

## **B** ■ Cognitive and Emotional Changes

- Memory lapses and slower information processing are normal; dementia is not.
- Some elders may experience depression or anxiety due to isolation, loss, or changing roles.
- Decision-making may take more time, but their input remains important.

**Caregiver Tip:** Practice patience. Speak clearly and slowly, give time for responses, and keep routines predictable.

## **C** ■ Social and Cultural Context in the Philippines

In the Philippines, caring for elders is often a shared family responsibility. Many elders live with their children or extended family. Barangay health centers, senior citizens' associations, and local organizations can provide basic checkups, medicines, or social activities.

Elders hold respected positions in the family. Upholding their dignity, independence, and participation in decisions is just as important as physical care.

# Daily Care Essentials

Caring for your elderly loved one's daily needs is more than just keeping them clean and fed – it's about helping them live comfortably, maintain their dignity, and stay as independent as possible. The following routines are the foundation of everyday caregiving at home.

## A ■ Personal Hygiene & Grooming

Regular hygiene keeps your loved one healthy and prevents infections. It's also a good time to observe their overall condition.



### Skin Care:

- Apply mild lotion daily to prevent dryness and skin tears.
- Check for pressure sores (especially on the back, hips, and heels) for those who stay in bed often.
- For immobile patients, turn them every 2 hours to prevent pressure sores.





### **Bathing:**

- Use a non-slip mat and grab bars to prevent falls.
- Prepare towels and clothes in advance to keep the elder warm after bathing.
- If standing is difficult, sponge baths or sitting on a sturdy chair works well.



### **Oral & Hair Care:**

- Brush teeth twice a day or clean dentures regularly.
- Keep hair neat to boost confidence and hygiene.



### **Toileting:**

- Ensure the toilet is accessible, well-lit, and has grab bars.
- Maintain dignity and privacy during assistance.

## **B ■ Nutrition & Hydration**

Good nutrition supports strength, immunity, and overall well-being. Aging bodies often need fewer calories but more nutrients.

- Offer balanced meals with vegetables, fruits, lean proteins, and whole grains.
- Limit salty, fatty, or sugary foods, especially for elders with hypertension, diabetes, or heart disease.
- Cut food into smaller pieces if chewing is difficult. For swallowing problems, consult a doctor for texture-modified diets.
- Encourage water intake throughout the day; dehydration is common in older adults.

Remember! Each elder has unique health needs, so pay close attention to their food restrictions to help manage their conditions and keep them healthy.

## C ■ Mobility, Transfers & Exercise

Staying mobile promotes independence and prevents complications like pressure sores, constipation, and muscle loss.

- Encourage light daily movement such as short walks around the house or gentle stretching.
- Use mobility aids (e.g., canes, walkers) properly adjusted to their height.
- When transferring from bed to chair or standing up:
  - Use a stable stance and support their weight safely.
  - Avoid sudden pulling; guide gently.



- Clear pathways of rugs or clutter to prevent falls.

# D ■ Sleep & Rest

Quality sleep supports memory, mood, and healing. Aging may change sleep patterns, but good routines help maintain rest.

## Promote better sleep by:

- Keeping a regular bedtime and wake-up time.
- Creating a quiet, dim, and comfortable sleeping space.
- Limiting caffeine or heavy meals at night.
- Encouraging light daytime activity to promote nighttime sleepiness.



**If sleep problems persist, consult a doctor to rule out conditions like pain, sleep apnea, or medication side effects.**

# Safety and Medical Care

Keeping your elderly loved one safe and healthy involves preventive care, daily health monitoring, and being prepared for emergencies. Many health issues can be managed early if caregivers stay observant and organized.

## **A** ■ Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies can happen unexpectedly – from sudden illness to natural disasters. Being ready can save lives. Create an Emergency Plan:

- Keep a list of emergency contacts by the phone or posted on the wall:
  - Family members
  - Barangay health center or nearest clinic
  - Local ambulance or hospital numbers
- Prepare a go-bag with essentials: medications, medical records, clothes, bottled water, IDs, and a flashlight.
- Post clear instructions near the elder's bed in case another family member needs to assist.
- Learn basic first aid (e.g., for choking, wounds, CPR)





## **B** ■ Monitoring Health & Recognizing Warning Signs

Regular monitoring helps detect issues early and track progress for chronic conditions.

### **What to Monitor:**

- **Vital signs:** blood pressure, temperature, heart rate, and sometimes blood sugar
- **Weight changes:** sudden loss may indicate illness
- **Behavior and mood:** confusion, agitation, or sudden withdrawal could be warning signs
- **Skin and wounds:** check for bedsores, infections, or unusual bruising

### **Seek Medical Help If You Notice:**

- Sudden weakness, slurred speech, or facial drooping (possible stroke)
- Difficulty breathing or chest pain
- High or persistent fever
- Severe dehydration (dry mouth, confusion, little to no urine)
- Sudden confusion or delirium

# Caregiver Self-Care

Caring for an elderly loved one is an act of love – but it can also be physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding. To give good care, you must also care for yourself.

## **A.** Simple Stress Management Techniques

You don't need hours to reset—small steps help:

- Take short breaks during the day for a walk, a cup of tea, or quiet time.
- Breathe deeply: Inhale for 5 counts, exhale for 5. Repeat for 2–3 minutes. This calms the body and mind.
- Use gentle movements: Raise your arms as you breathe in, lower them as you exhale slowly.



## **B.** Positive Mindset & Problem-Solving

Challenging days are part of caregiving. When problems arise, try:

- Setting realistic expectations: You can't do everything alone – and that's okay.
- Breaking big issues into small, manageable steps.
- Listing possible solutions and their pros and cons.
- Reaching out for support instead of carrying everything alone.

Avoid comparing yourself to others. Every family's journey is different, and there's no "perfect" caregiver.



## C ■ Prioritize Self-Care

Self-care doesn't have to be elaborate. It can be as simple as:

- Maintaining your own health: eat well, hydrate, and sleep as regularly as possible.
- Doing small things you enjoy – reading, chatting with a friend, prayer, music, or a short walk.
- Saying “no” to extra commitments that drain you
- Saying “yes” to help when someone offers it because caregiving is a shared journey.

Remember! Caregivers also need to stay healthy.



## D ■ When to Seek Help

If stress becomes overwhelming or lasts for weeks, don't hesitate to talk to a trusted professional. Pediatricians, family doctors, counselors, or support that can provide guidance. Seeking help early supports both you and your care recipient well-being.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## **1. What should I do during a medical emergency?**

Call emergency services immediately. Make sure to always keep medical records, emergency contacts, and medications easily accessible.

## **2. Are there financial assistance programs for the Elderly?**

Yes! Local government units, DSWD, PhilHealth, and some NGOs offer medical aid, caregiving support, and financial subsidies.

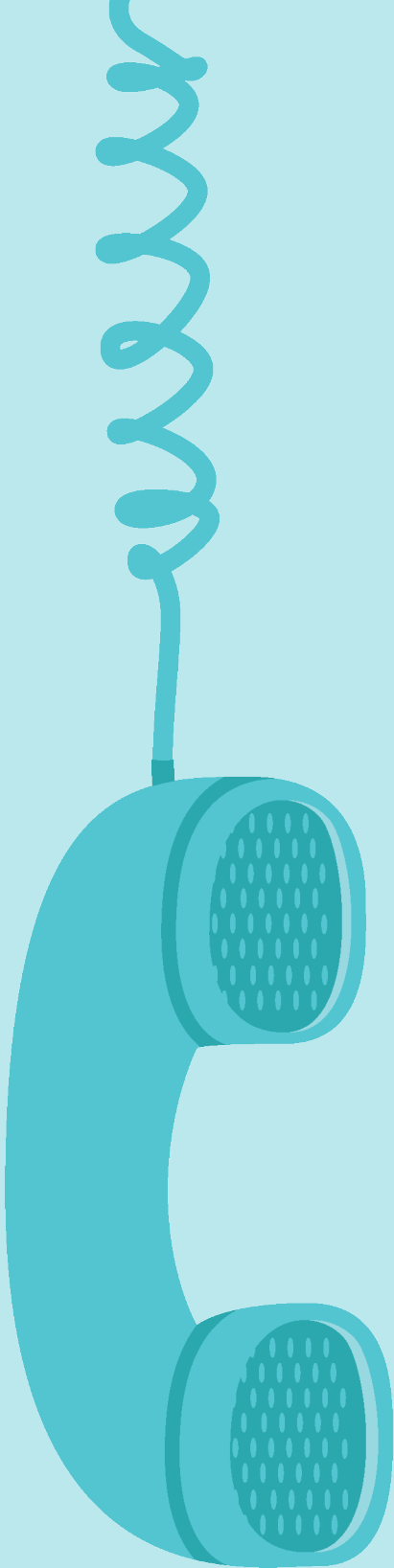
## **3. How often should an elderly person see a doctor?**

At least once a year for general checkups, or more frequently if they have chronic conditions.

#### **4. What are common signs of caregiver burnout that I should watch for?**

Exhaustion, irritability, withdrawal from others, sleep problems, feeling overwhelmed, or resentment. Addressing these early prevents long-term mental and physical strain.





- Philippine National Emergency Hotline: **911**
- DOH Health Emergency Management Bureau: **(02) 8711-1001 to 02 / (02) 8740-5030**
- Philippine Red Cross Emergency Hotline: **143 or (02) 527-0000**

# Support and Connection

# Daily Medication Schedule

## Patient Information:

Patient Name:	Gender:
Contact Info:	Date of Birth:

## Medication List:

Medication Name	Dosage	Frequency	Time to Take	Notes

## Daily Schedule:

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

## Notes:

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# Information Sheet

Name of Elder:

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Age / Birthday:

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Address:

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Primary Contact Person:

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Emergency Contact Number:

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Barangay / Health Center Number:

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Doctor / Clinic:

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Hospital / ER:

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Known Conditions (e.g., hypertension, diabetes, dementia):

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Medications:

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Allergies:

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Special Instructions (e.g., wheelchair user, hearing aid, etc.):

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