

Caring Calendar 2008



NICE National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly
Initiative nationale pour le soin des personnes âgées
We care together
Ensemble pour le bien-être des aînés





If you are interested in finding out more about any of the information contained in this calendar, please visit the NICE website and click on the *Best Practices* button, where there are links to many online sources of information that the calendar was based on:

[*http://www.nicenet.ca*](http://www.nicenet.ca)

January



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|-----------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | 1 New Years Day | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

Changes in Family Relationships



Do you have a family member or friend that you can count on being there for you when you need them?

Typically when caring for an older, chronically ill family member, changes in family relationships occur. There are different responses to these changes, all of which are natural. Sample responses include:

- Despite what you know about the disease you continue to hope that your relative will get better
- Your family member's behavior may embarrass you so you want to exclude him/her from activities that were previously enjoyable
- You may isolate yourself and the person you care for from the rest of your family
- Although it may take time, you find that you are able to adapt to the changes in family life that were necessitated by caring for a relative with a chronic disease
- You make efforts to get other family members involved in the care of your relative
- You are prepared to get help from a professional health care provider so as to coordinate and share caregiving responsibilities with other family members

February



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|-------------------|--------|-----------------|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 Groundhog Day |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 Valentines Day | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | |

Managing Incontinence

If incontinence happens you might consider the following:



- Ensure that your older family member has a physical examination to identify if a physical problem is present
- Scheduled toileting is recommended throughout the day for an older family member who needs assistance in toileting
- Encourage adequate fluid and fiber intake
- Reduce caffeine intake

Feeling frustrated is a normal response to managing your relative's problems with incontinence

March



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|------------------------------|---------------------|---------|-----------|----------|---------------------|----------|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Daylight Savings Time Begins | | | | | | |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| | | | | | First Day of Spring | |
| 16 | 17 St. Patricks Day | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |

Engaging in activities of interest

can promote well-being for you and the person you care for



- Engage your family member in choosing their favorite activities whenever possible
- Suggest activities based on your knowledge or your relative's interests
- Share activities that interest both of you; this will enhance communication
- Ask your relative to help out with household tasks when possible
- Share your memories by talking, making photo albums, writing a journal, reading books of interest

Have you done something that interests you today?

April



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|-------------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | 1 April Fools Day | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 Earth Day | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | | |

Managing Depression



Depression across the lifespan happens a lot. Getting help to manage depression is important

If you or your older family member are struggling with depression there are a number of things you can do, including:

- engaging in social activities with family members and friends
- staying physically active
- engaging in activities and hobbies
- challenging negative thoughts about yourself, others, or the future
- contacting a nurse, social worker, doctor, psychologist, or other community mental health provider if sadness is persistent or severe

May



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|----------------|-----------------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 Mothers Day | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 | 19 Victoria Day | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

How to respond to challenging behaviours

Sometimes chronically ill older adults behave in ways that are frightening or upsetting to caregivers. When this happens, you might consider the following:



In an exchange with an aggressive relative, protect yourself

- Stay calm; if you feel yourself becoming agitated or angry, leave the room and calm down using whatever strategy works for you
- Determine whether the behaviour may be harmful to the person or others
- If your relative is being aggressive and the situation appears unsafe for you, move away and keep a distance between you
- Speak in a calm, quiet voice and try to put into words what you think your relative is feeling and what might have triggered his/her aggressive response
- If your relative is accustomed to having you touch her/him while speaking you can hold a hand, stroke an arm, etc
- Try to identify what may be triggering the behaviour; you know your family member the best and know best how to interpret the meaning of the behaviour

June



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|----------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 Fathers Day | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 First Day of Summer |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | | | | | |

Medication Safety

Medications are beneficial, but can also have negative side effects.

Here are some suggestions to help you safely manage your family member's medications:



Your pharmacist is a great person to consult regarding managing medications

- Ask questions: be sure that you understand what the medications are for, what the side effects are, and whether different medications can be taken together without bad effects
- Follow the doctor's instructions. Do not change the dosage or frequency of intake without supervision from your health care provider
- Always remember to tell your doctor what other medications your family member is taking (or show him the drug label). This is important so that the doctor can make sure that each medication is appropriate, and that the combination of medications is safe
- Do not use drugs after the expiry date or if the appearance has changed
- Do not share your prescribed drugs with others. This could have damaging effects
- Store medications as instructed by your pharmacist
- To help you keep track of medications to be taken each day you can use 'weekly pill boxes' available from your pharmacist

July



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|--------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | 1 Canada Day | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

Keeping physically active

is important for you and the person you care for



Sharing a physical activity with the person you care for can be fun

- Walking is one of the safest physical activities
- People with less mobility can do sitting exercises
- You can use weights to strengthen your arm and leg muscles
- Wear shoes that fit properly and have flat heels

Benefits of keeping physically active include:

- Better balance and strength
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Improved mobility
- Improved mood

Caution: Do not engage in any new physical activity without consulting your health care provider.

August



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|-----------------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 Civic Holiday | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| | 31 | | | | | |



Keeping a safe home

For frail and/or disabled adults, you will need to consider the following:



Many homecare agencies and government programs subsidize the costs of making your home safe

- Arrange room furniture to clear pathways
- Remove scatter rugs
- Remove clutter, including electrical cords in all pathways
- Ensure rooms are well lit
- Keep all hazardous materials in locked cabinets
- In the bathroom, install grab bars in the bathtub and shower
- Use a bath seat
- Mark stair edges with paint or tape
- If wandering is an issue, put safety locks on all exit doors

September



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------------|------------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | 1 Labour Day | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| | | Grandparents Day | | | | |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| | | | | | | |

Problems with eating

To encourage an older family member to eat, you might:



Sometimes problems with eating arise if your relative has mouth sores or poorly fitting dentures

- Share a meal together
- Seat yourself so that you face each other
- Allow your family member to choose foods they like best
- Use words and gestures to cue the person to eat
- Encourage your relative to feed him or herself
- Assist with feeding when necessary
- If difficulty swallowing, provide soft mashed or minced foods that minimize chewing

Caution: Problems with swallowing should be discussed with your health care provider.

October



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|---------------------|---------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------|
| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | 13 Thanksgiving Day | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 Halloween | |

Maintaining a healthy diet

is important for you and the person you care for



Engage your family member in choosing and cooking healthy food

- The food you normally choose has probably been part of your lifestyle for a long time
- It is difficult to change eating habits, especially in the face of caregiving demands
- Be creative and gradually make food selections that match the Canada Food Guide
- Cut down on fast foods with high fat, lots of chemicals added, with low nutritional value
- To help reduce costs buy fresh fruit and vegetables in season
- Fresh vegetables and fruit may be costly, but their frozen versions are equally nutritious

Caution: If you or your relative are on a prescribed diet, consult with your health care provider before making any of the changes suggested above.

November



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|----------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | | | | | 1 |
| Daylight Savings Time Ends | | | | | | |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| | | Remembrance Day | | | | |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 30 | | | | | | |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |

Communicating with a non-verbal or confused family member



- Reduce distractions (music, tv, radio)
- Maintain eye contact
- Speak slowly
- Use shorter sentences
- Give step-by-step instructions
- Demonstrate through gestures
- Be patient and allow time for the message to be understood and for the person to respond

When you can't understand what your relative is trying to tell you, draw on what you know about them to figure out what they mean.

December



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---------------------|--------|---------|------------------|----------|---------------|----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| First Day of Winter | | | | | | |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 Boxing Day | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 New Years Eve | | | |

Family matters: Caregiving support

This calendar is designed to support the work of families in providing care to their older family members. The strategies are drawn from current research findings and acknowledge some of the behaviours that an older family member might demonstrate. Links to the research presented in this calendar can be found on the NICE website at www.nicenet.ca

Caring for yourself

To avoid caregiver burnout, consider the following:



Be good to yourself; if you don't, both your health and your relative's health will suffer

- Set aside time each day to do something that's for you
- Stay socially connected with family and friends (phone calls, emails, etc.)
- Choose someone you can confide in and talk about your most frustrating and depressing caregiver experiences
- Arrange for a relative or friend to sit with your family member so you can take some time away for yourself
- Arrange respite care by taking your relative to community day programs
- Arrange for nursing home respite care for several weeks so that you can take a holiday
- Join a caregiver support group offered in your community

A Self-Assessment Tool for Caregivers



For each item below, choose a number from 1 (almost always) to 5 (never), according to how often each statement applies to you.

1 = Never

2 = Rarely

3 = Occasionally

4 = Frequently

5 = Almost Always

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I exercise on a regular basis. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I make and keep necessary medical and dental appointments. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have a job or regular volunteer activity that is gratifying. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I sleep well. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I'm in a good mood most days. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I get an adequate amount of rest each day. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have a hobby or recreational activity I enjoy and spend time doing. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I eat at least two to three balanced meals a day. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have at least one person in whom I can confide (discuss my problems, successes). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I take time to do things that are important to me (e.g. go to church, spend time alone, garden, read, go to the movies etc.). | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I feel energetic. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I have personal goals and am taking steps to achieve them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Add the numbers you circled for each item to arrive at a Total Score _____

A total score of 12 to 24: You are having a lot of trouble taking care of yourself.

A total score of 25 to 36: You might think about taking care of yourself and may be at a moderately high risk for personal health problems.

A total score of 37 to 48: You are taking reasonably adequate care of yourself.

A total score of 48 to 60: You are taking good care of yourself.

Adapted from Bass, D.S. (1990). *Caring families: Supports and interventions*. Silver Spring, MD: National Association of Social Workers.