

Step 1: Form Your Teams

Chances are, the person you provide care for already has a team working to meet their needs. But what about yours? While it can be difficult to make time for yourself, it's important to think about who can support your health, too. Your wellbeing will directly impact your ability to support others.

The older adult's team may include:

- A **primary care doctor** to manage overall health
- A nurse to **coordinate** care
- A **pharmacist** to answer questions about medicines
- A **physical therapist** to teach strength exercises
- A **social worker** to help them get services to stay at home

Your own team may include:

- A **primary care doctor** to manage overall health
- A **social worker** to connect you to community resources like respite care, homemaker assistance, and financial support
- A **homemaker** or other **paid caregiver** can provide in-home assistance for the older adult and give you more time for yourself

Who is on your teams?

Remember, every care team is different, and your teams may change over time.

The older adult's team:

My team:

4Ms for both of you

What Matters

What matters most to each of you right now?

Medication

What do each of you take? Are there any side effects?

Mind

*How are you each thinking and feeling?
How are you managing your caregiving responsibilities?*

Mobility

How do you stay active? Is the person you provide care for able to move safely around their home and community?



Do you provide care or support for an older adult?

Many people don't realize they are caregivers, even if they are supporting an older adult by:

- Running errands or providing transportation
- Assisting with household chores or finances
- Managing health care, such as organizing medicine or making doctor appointments

These are just some examples of support you may be providing as a caregiver. Providing care can be as overwhelming as it can be meaningful, and you may not be in this role by choice. This guide offers ways to strengthen an older adult's care, while also maintaining care for yourself.

This brochure was co-designed by caregivers of older adults in partnership with Rush University Medical Center.

Step 2: Identify Your 4Ms

Each of the 4Ms—**What Matters, Medication, Mind, and Mobility**—are important to consider for yourself and the person for whom you provide care.



What Matters

No matter what's going on, your teams should know and act on What Matters to you both when planning and providing your care.

Medication

Both of you may take medicine to manage your health and support what matters to you. Sometimes, medicine can create unwanted side effects.

Mind

Older adults are at risk for dementia (loss of mental abilities), delirium (sudden confusion), and depression (loss of interest, sadness). As a caregiver, you may feel overwhelmed, sad, and anxious from providing care.

Mobility

Falls can cause serious injury for older adults, so it's important they can get around safely at home. As a caregiver, it's important to move daily to stay strong enough to care for them and yourself.

Step 3: Put the 4Ms for both of you into Action!

Your teams can support the 4Ms for each of you in many ways. Here are some ideas to get started:

What Matters

- Create a care plan with your teams to ensure What Matters is understood by all. Be sure you both agree with any plans.
- With the older adult's permission, ask to be noted as a caregiver in their medical record. This will allow their team to contact you with any important information.
- Provide all necessary legal paperwork, such as a Healthcare Power of Attorney form, so that you can advocate for What Matters to them.

Medication

- Talk with both of your care teams to make sure all prescribed and over-the-counter medicines are necessary, even ones you've been taking for a long time. Ask about potential side effects and how medicines interact with each other.
- Assist the older adult in taking medicines properly and watch for infections to avoid delirium, or sudden confusion.
- What you eat also affects your overall wellness. Ask your team about healthy food options and how to access them.

Mind

- Older adults benefit from yearly screening regarding mood and memory. If you notice the person you care for becoming confused or their behavior changes suddenly, get medical help right away.
- Stress can also have an impact on mental health. If either of you are in need of immediate mental health support, dial 988 to reach the 24/7 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.
- Take care of yourself by reaching out to your teams, family, friends, and communities for support.

Mobility

- How does the person you care for get around at home or from place to place? What's working and what's not? Consider removing area rugs and adding or replacing handrails for safety.
- Ask your care teams about exercises to increase strength, flexibility, and balance.
- Stay active! Even adding a five-minute stretch break or an afternoon walk to your routine can help you stay strong and relieve stress.

In an Age-Friendly Health System, every older adult gets the best care possible, is not harmed by health care, and is highly satisfied with the care they receive. This is achieved when the health system addresses the 4Ms: What Matters, Mobility, Medication and Mind.

Age-Friendly Health Systems

An initiative of The John A. Hartford Foundation and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) in partnership with the American Hospital Association (AHA) and the Catholic Health Association of the United States (CHA).

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