

How to Care for Someone with Complex Medical Conditions

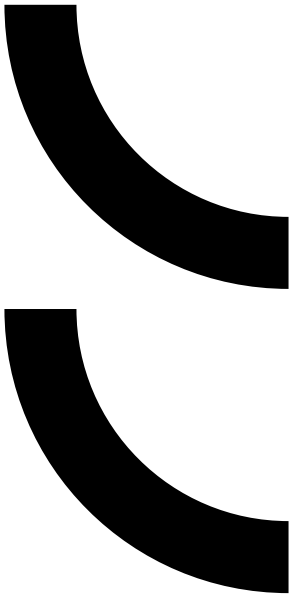
Sometimes taking care of a loved one with a complex medical condition like dementia seems like one crisis after another. You never feel that the job is done, let alone done well. At other times, you might experience a lull. Your loved one's condition stabilizes, and you get used to a new normal. Then another crisis hits. You never know what to expect next.

This unpredictability can be difficult for anyone, but it's especially hard for people who like to feel in control of their surroundings. How do you manage complex medical conditions that seem completely unmanageable?

Plan for Change

Begin by trying to learn about what might be coming down the road. Talk to your loved one's doctor about how their condition might progress and what to expect in the next phase. Armed with this knowledge, try to prepare for upcoming changes in their health. Ask yourself questions like, "Are there safety hazards in the home? Will we need to get a safety alert bracelet, or will we need to find someone to stay with Dad?"

Caregiving comes with many responsibilities and that can be overwhelming. VNS Health offers support services to give you expert help and guidance.



Accept Your Limits

Not every problem that arises will have a perfect solution. When you have the necessary tools and resources, many challenges can be dealt with easily. But a chronic illness or a condition like dementia often cannot.

The most important thing is to accept imperfection. Trying to find the right answer all the time can lead to burnout. Accept your limitations and realize that on some days, your best won't be that great.

Assess Your Own Needs

At the same time, assess your own needs. When flight attendants do their safety lecture before a plane takes off, they tell you to put your own oxygen mask on before helping

other people. That same thing holds when you're a caregiver. You cannot be there for a person who needs your help if you do not take care of yourself.

Think about whether you need outside help – from a family member, a friend, or a [home health aide](#). Reaching out to others who are in your situation, perhaps through a support group or an online forum, can help you avoid feeling isolated. Additionally, find time to relax. Take advantage of [respite care](#) to do something you enjoy, or make time for [relaxation techniques](#) like deep breathing.

Caregiving is often a long-term process. It's important to find a way to make it a part of your life, but in a way that you can live with over time – this is the real challenge.