

Tips for Caregivers During The Holidays

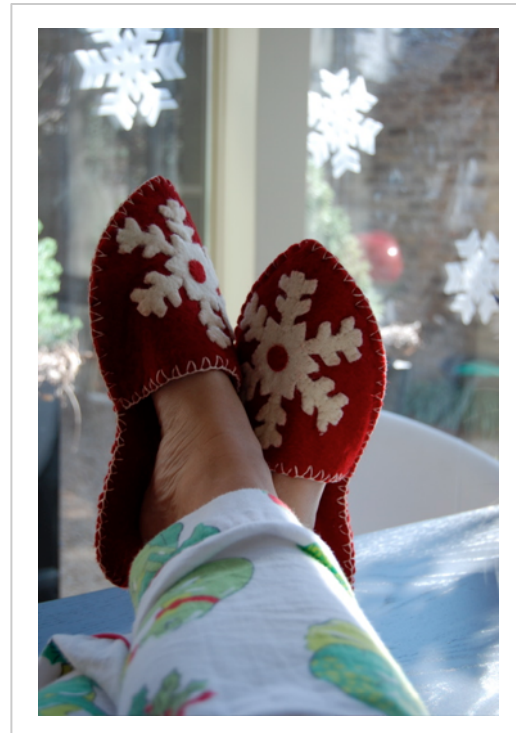
By Brenda Sangster, Capital District Caregiver Support Coordinator

For those who are caregivers to a family member or friend, the holiday season can be a very stressful time of year. Stress occurs when we do too much, sleep too little, and neglect to take care of ourselves.

The holiday season can also be a time to enjoy festive gatherings with family and friends.

Consider the following tips to help you and your care recipient to reduce stress at this time of year.

- Set goals and realize your limitations. Be realistic of what you can and cannot do.
- Ask for and accept help from family members and friends. Even though they might have the best intentions, they may not know what you really need. For example, ask them in advance to help with food, shopping, gift-wrapping, or other caregiving needs.
- If you are planning on having a large group over, consider a potluck meal. Ask family or friends to bring a favourite dish. This can lessen your stress levels because you won't be doing everything yourself.
- Talk to your loved one about holiday plans. If a large family gathering is likely to create too much work and stress for you both, suggest that family and friends spend some individual quality time with you.
- Educate family and friends about your care recipient's health condition. Give them tools for how to communicate effectively with him or her.



- Don't abandon your own health during this time. It is okay to treat yourself, but try to avoid giving into stress-driven urges.
- Exercise regularly. Regular exercise can be helpful to your own physical and emotional well being.
- Take time out for yourself. Schedule some "me time", do some journaling, sit and relax, put your feet up, listen to music, read a book, go for a walk, or visit friends.
- Make sure you get plenty of rest. Remember to laugh and have fun.

Throughout the holiday season remember to be good to yourself. As a caregiver, you deserve support and quality time for **you** to keep your batteries charged. It is important to recognize that being able to have your family and friends around you during the holidays is a gift and can create memories to treasure.