

Caregivers' Monday is the latest initiative from The Monday Campaigns, the nonprofit organization founded in 2005 in association with Johns Hopkins, Columbia and Syracuse Universities. **Why Monday? Research by Johns Hopkins shows that most people see Monday as a day for a fresh start and are most likely to start healthy behaviors like diet and exercise. Caregivers' Monday encourages caregivers to use Monday as the day to recharge and refocus on their own health to better serve their dependent loved ones.**

We created a web page: www.caregiversmonday.org that features tips, news and key resources that can help organizations serving caregivers incorporate the Monday idea into their own programs. To help you get started, we're offering the following 53 tips that you can share with caregivers every Monday on your website or newsletter. The tips are compiled from the best advice pulled from a cross section of caregiving organizations. We encourage you to add your tips and ask the caregivers you serve to contribute their own for the benefit of others.

January 2

Bring Resolutions into Focus

Commit to a healthier year for you and the person you care for by pledging to plan. Come up with a weekly routine that balances your responsibilities as a caregiver with some down time. If you become overwhelmed one week, use Monday to recommit to your goals. If you stick with it each week, healthy habits will become second nature in no time!

January 9

Learn from Other Caregivers

Get tips from caregiving experts to start off your week. For example, "Me Time Monday" videos and tip sheets from the Caregiving Club offer advice to help caregivers balance self-care while caring for a loved one.

January 16

Start with Small Changes

With caregiving taking a large part of your day, be sure to carve out some health time for yourself. Begin with small steps in your routine and build from there. Take a break with a Monday mile during your break, or do crunches during TV commercials or dance while cooking. Even a little extra movement can improve health and reduce stress.

January 23

Get Real about Your Ideal

Building a lifetime of healthy habits doesn't happen overnight, especially if you're balancing your needs with taking care of a loved one. Realistic expectations and a positive mindset will greatly increase your likelihood of success. So take it one step at a time and celebrate progress along the way.

Caregivers' Monday Tips

January 30

Mend your Mood with Music

Set yourself up for a better week this Monday by composing a CD or playlist of music that makes you smile or feel happy. Listen to your tunes if you feel blue, start stressing or just want to enjoy!

February 6

Shop & Burn calories

Taking a break by shopping? Shopping at the mall burns more calories than shopping online. Four hours of shopping can burn 400 to 800 calories. While you're there, maximize it by taking an extra lap – or two – around the mall before you start spending.

February 13

Love Your Heart

February is National Heart Month, so take simple actions this week for better heart health like moving more, maintaining a healthy weight, minimizing stress and cutting smoking. These actions can help reduce your risk of stroke, heart disease and high blood pressure.

February 20

Be Fruitful

Caregiving can get in the way of healthy snacks. To avoid calorie-laden snacks, keep healthful foods close at hand to ensure success. Have a fruit bowl on your counter at home, stash almonds at work, or keep pre-washed and cut carrots, peppers and broccoli crowns in your fridge for a quick nutritious snack.

February 27

Take Five for Fitness

Give yourself some "Me Time Monday" by squeezing 2 ¼ hours of weekly activity into

your schedule. Start this Monday by taking five-minute fitness breaks throughout the day. Smaller bursts of movement won't seem as daunting but will still have an impact.

March 5

Curb Stress

Remember to take a few minutes for yourself this week. If you're feeling overwhelmed with caregiving, step away from the situation, re-focus your thoughts and devote time to deep, meditative breathing.

March 12

Avoid Feeding Your Feelings

Before you rush into an unhealthy food choice, ask yourself: are you truly hungry? You may just be tired, sad, stressed or lonely. Evaluating your emotions and eating mindfully can drastically cut unnecessary calories.

March 19

Drive Yourself to Move

Having a hard time fitting in fitness? Find more time for your exercise goals by avoiding your car. Move it this Monday by walking, biking or taking public transportation. Less time driving means more time for activity.

March 26

Add Success to your Schedule

Good health should always top your priority list! A few minutes here and there are all it takes to bring balance to your busy life. You can stay fit by getting off the bus a stop early, taking the stairs whenever possible or walking to the store. Make eating right easy by scheduling a weekly supermarket trip, planning out your meals and bringing your lunch with you instead of getting fast food.

Caregivers' Monday Tips

April 2

Refresh Your Resolve

Take some time this week to think about your health goals and evaluate your progress. Is this where you hoped to be? If not, what steps can you take to guarantee results? Come up with a revised weekly plan that will help you succeed.

April 9

Use Social Media to Connect

When caregiving gets overwhelming, reach out by connecting with friends on Facebook or Twitter. It's a quick and easy way to catch up.

April 16

Step Up to Spring

Make the most of spring weather for a refreshing break from caregiving activities. Get outdoor exercise with everyday activities. Wash the car by hand, perform gardening or home repair, or just bask in the springtime sun.

April 23

Secure Some Sleep

Sleep soundly this week by adding exercise to your morning, afternoon or early evening. Track your progress by keeping a sleep journal and noting how you feel when you wake up in the morning.

April 30

Brush Up on Oral Hygiene

Help prevent dental problems by keeping your mouth healthy and clean. It's an important part of maintaining a clean bill of health! This week, floss your teeth every day if you don't already do so. Recommit to flossing every Monday and soon it will become second nature.

May 7

Get a Healthy Hobby

Recharge yourself from the stress of caregiving by embracing a healthy hobby. Move it this Monday by walking a mile, swimming, biking, running, practicing yoga or partaking in another activity that you've always wanted to try.

May 14

Get Veggies on Your Side

Caregiving can sap your energy. Keep your stamina by making sure you're getting the most out of your meals with foods that are low in fat, high in fiber and full of essential nutrients. Try eating at least 2 vegetables with dinner or a vegetable and a bean dish.

May 21

Laugh for Your Health

A good laugh can relieve pain, soothe tension and make it easier to cope with stressful caregiving situations. If you're feeling tense this week, put a smile on your face by calling a friend, playing a silly game with your kids or swapping cheesy jokes with a loved one.

May 28

Shake Your Salt Intake

Stay healthy by avoiding a high-sodium diet. It raises your blood pressure, increasing your risk for stroke and heart disease. Cut back this week by snubbing your salt shaker and opting for low or reduced sodium soups, broths, beans and seasonings.

June 4

Wake Up and Walk

Build steps into your caregiving day by walking whenever you can. Take a lap around the block to relieve stress, park farther from the store entrance or take the stairs instead of an escalator.

Caregivers' Monday Tips

June 11

Lose Yourself in a Book

Take advantage of your local library! Borrow books that can help you escape the pressure of caregiving. These days you can even renew your books online if you don't have time to finish them before they're due back.

June 18

Be a Healthy Role Model

Help those you're caring for to develop healthy habits by setting a good example. Teach them about proper nutrition by serving healthful meals and show them how much fun fitness can be by participating and inviting them to join in appropriate exercises.

June 25

Have Fun in the Sun

Go ahead and bask in the sun's rays – it helps melt away caregiving stress! But don't forget to wear protective clothing and seek the shade. Remember to be especially careful at the beach: water and sand reflect the sun's rays, increasing your chance of sunburn.

July 2

Celebrate July 4th Holiday with Friends & Family

Don't miss out on celebrating special days with loved ones. Involve the person you're caring for in the fun. Even just looking at the fireworks on TV can get you excited about the holiday.

July 9

Don't Be Late to Hydrate

While in the midst of caregiving, you may forget to quench your thirst. Don't. Waiting until you're thirsty is not a good indication of

hydration. Water is essential for proper cell function, waste removal and joint lubrication, so be sure that you're getting enough. Drink 6-8 glasses of water each day, especially before and after exercise.

July 16

Pair Up, Slim Down

Fit in some physical activity and reduce stress during your caregiving day. Get a friend or family member to commit to an activity meet-up at least once a week. Live far away? Set up an exercise challenge with weekly check-in calls or e-mails.

July 23

Take Time Off

Sometimes you just need to get away from it all! Be sure to take occasional vacations from caregiving. Even some time to yourself at home or a long weekend away can reinvigorate you and make you feel ready to face daily obstacles.

July 30

Find Your Zeal for Zen

Meditation can cut caregiving stress by quieting the steady stream of thoughts that crowd the mind. You can meditate anywhere for any length of time, so squeeze in a mindful moment this Monday. Hone your ohm through weekly practice and patience.

August 6

Go Outdoors and Hear the Music

Take advantage of warm summer nights by stepping out under starry skies. Relax on the grass with bare feet and your favorite music playing. It's a soothing way to take a break from caregiving chores.

Caregivers' Monday Tips

August 13

Time for a Change of Pace?

Getting bored with your exercise routine? Switch it up this week! Varying activity means you'll work new muscle groups, plus if you're engaged you're more likely to stick with it. Regular exercise helps with your health, which is essential for any caregiver.

August 20

Make an Appointment with Prevention

Caregivers often don't make time to get their annual checkups. When was the last time you saw your doctor? If not, schedule an appointment this Monday. General check-ups can catch problems early and ensure timely treatment and better health.

August 27

Snack Well, Eat Better

There's nothing wrong with the occasional snack! They can help you keep your energy up and balance meals with a busy schedule. When enjoyed in moderation, the right snacks can actually reduce mealtime binging and overall calories consumed. Feeling peckish this week? Opt for raw veggies, nuts, fruit, whole-grain crackers or low-fat cheeses.

September 3

Take a Nature Break

Take time this week from caregiving by enjoying nature. Whether you go for a bike ride, observe wildlife or participate in a sporting event, take advantage of opportunities for outdoor activities.

September 10

Cover Wholes in Your Diet

You need energy for caregiving and whole

grains can help! Get in three servings a day by trying products that list "whole grain", "whole wheat" or "whole oats" as their first ingredient. Whole grains are a simple swap that will boost your intake of iron and fiber.

September 17

Go the Extra Mile

Make an effort to boost your physical activity this week. Moderately increase the time, intensity, or number of your current workouts. Building on your usual exercise routine will result in more activity over time – resulting in a healthier you to manage your caregiving role.

September 24

Rethink Your Routine

Fall is upon us – Time to wind down from summer vacation and settle back into a regular schedule. Take time this week to reevaluate your schedule and priorities for the coming season. Be sure to add "Me Time Mondays" in your calendar. Planning reduces stress and ensures that healthy habits find their way into your daily life.

October 1

Enjoy Fall's Bounty

Take time out of your busy caregiving schedule to savor the sights, smells and tastes of fall! Take a walk in the autumn foliage or celebrate the bounty of beets, squash, okra and pumpkin at your local farmer's market.

October 8

Fall into Festive Fitness

Autumn's crisp air makes it the perfect time of the year for outdoor exercise. Take a break from your caregiving responsibilities by walking the dog in the park or raking up the yard.

Caregivers' Monday Tips

October 15

Take the Stress out of Supermarket Shopping

Spend less time and money in the grocery store by having a plan of attack. Shape a shopping list around this week's meals and stick to it. Dodge unhealthy temptations by avoiding the supermarket when you're tired or hungry.

October 22

Get Enough Fiber

With your caregiving chores, it's easy to forget to eat healthy. Get your recommended 25-30 grams of fiber each day with several servings of fiber-rich food like whole grains, fruits, vegetable and legumes. Fiber has been shown to improve digestion, regulate blood sugar and help you feel fuller, longer.

October 29

Scare Up Some Active Fun

Halloween can be a sweet holiday or a caloric nightmare. Take time out to enjoy this fun tradition by balancing the good with the bad. Think before you bite into that candy. Instead, enjoy outdoor activities: Try building a scarecrow with your kids, picking apples or attending local Halloween activities like parades or haunted houses.

November 5

Give Yourself a Pat on the Back

November is National Family Caregivers' Month. The National Family Caregivers Association stresses the importance of trying to maintain a positive attitude by recognizing your strengths and limitations. Believing in yourself and recognizing your strengths will improve your ability to set goals and boundaries for yourself and for your loved one.

November 12

Don't Let Diet Beat Us

Overwhelmed caregivers are subject to physical inactivity, obesity and high blood pressure. These are all risk factors that can lead to type-2 diabetes. Reduce your risk by eating less, moving more and focusing on a healthy diet of whole, unprocessed foods.

November 19

Protect Your Health

Heed this valuable reminder from the National Family Caregivers Association. It is critically important to maintain your physical and emotional health and well being - if you don't, who will? Your good health is the greatest gift you can give your loved one and your entire family.

November 26

Get Back on Track

Feel that you overindulged during the Thanksgiving feast? Don't get stressed out, or wait until New Year's to get back on track! Forgive yourself and move on. Use each Monday to get back on a healthy path with sensible diet and exercise.

December 3

Stay In, Work Out

Just because it's cold doesn't mean you can't keep moving! Keep yourself charged and ready for caregiving by making the most of the great indoors. Try gentle jumping jacks, leg lifts, sit-ups or improvised exercises set to music. If the person you're caring for can participate, invite them to join in, even if it's just enjoying the energetic music.

Caregivers' Monday Tips

December 10

Have a Havoc-Free Holiday

The holidays can be stressful when you're trying to balance the expectations of the season with the physical and emotional demands of caregiving. Take time this week to set realistic expectations about your holiday schedule and budget. Remember it's ok to say no if you're feeling overwhelmed!

December 17

Don't Hibernate

Get out and feel the warmth of your neighbors this season! Attend a holiday event like caroling, bake-sales, toy drives and school pageants. If appropriate, take the person you're caring for and enjoy the experience together.

December 24

Reduce Seasonal Stress

The demands of caregiving, family gatherings, gift-giving and other celebrations can leave you feeling anything but merry this time of year. Make the most of the season by skipping the perfect image of a "Hollywood Holiday" and being realistic about what you can accomplish. Leave yourself time and space to enjoy the little moments that make the season worthwhile.

December 31

A New Year Every Week

Take time this week to think about yourself and your goals for the coming year. Set a healthy resolution to care for yourself while caring for your loved one and stick to it. Evaluate your progress and set new goals every Monday. When you refocus your intentions each week, you're much more likely to change for good!