

Carers and health: GP surgeries make all the difference



Who is a carer?

A carer is someone of any age who, unpaid, is looking after a relative, friend or neighbour who is ill, frail, disabled, has mental health problems, or misuses drugs or alcohol.

Carers are important partners in implementing patient care plans, helping to reduce hospital visits and delaying the need for entry into residential care.

There are more than 108,000 carers in Hertfordshire, over 10% of the county's population. The figures are rising. Many carers come into your surgery and work hard to help look after patients. They need support and assistance because caring has an impact on the carer's own health.

Why is it important that carers receive support?

Carers need support to ensure they do not suffer ill-health and so they can continue in their role as partners in patient care. Research indicates high levels of stress, reduced immunity and likelihood of physical injury among carers, as well as increased risk of depression and stroke.

If a carer's health suffers, patients suffer too. This is avoidable, with the right support.

What help is available for carers?

Carers in Hertfordshire is a local charity working across the county to provide carers with training, information, advice and support.

Specific help is available for people caring for someone with dementia, with drug or alcohol issues, mental health problems or learning disabilities. And there are special support and involvement activities for young carers; those aged 8-18 who help look after someone in the family by taking on responsibilities normally handled by an adult.

Caring with Confidence is a series of free training sessions for carers

Make a Difference provides funded breaks for carers referred by their GP

It is important that carers are aware of the free services available to them, as soon as they take on a caring role.

What can you do to identify and support carers?

Many carers do not recognise themselves as carers and so do not seek support. Identifying and supporting carers early is cost effective and on-going help from Carers in Hertfordshire can prevent ill-health and a breakdown in care.

GPs and practice teams are ideally placed to identify carers.

If you notice someone accompanying a patient to appointments or collecting prescriptions, they may be a carer. Any patient with a long-term condition will have a carer.

Ensure all carers are on your carer register and tell them about Carers in Hertfordshire and the services available.

You have it in your power to make an enormous difference

Call us on **01992 58 69 69**
or email contact@carersinherts.org.uk



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