

## Caregiving Starts with Self-Care

If you are a caregiver or care partner to someone with IgA Nephropathy, it can feel overwhelming. And, as committed as you are to being there for your loved one, it may be difficult for them to accept your help, perhaps they're lashing out at you or pulling away. This can make your role even harder.

Meanwhile, as you try to "do it all," you might ignore what you need to stay strong and healthy and before you know it, it all feels like too much and you're the one in need of care!

**Use this worksheet to take stock of your self-care and remember: Looking after yourself and your needs is an important part of the journey.**

### Self-Care Check In

Self-care begins with self-awareness and an honest assessment of how you are doing. Answer the questions below to see how you are doing.

#### Do you:

- |   |                              |                             |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Take time for yourself each day (even just 15 minutes)?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Have a routine to wind down and relax in in the evenings?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Eat a healthy diet (one with plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean protein and limiting junk or fatty foods)? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Keep up with doctor and dentist appointments?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Limit alcohol?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Know what you need and ask for it?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Feel in touch with your feelings?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Have things on the calendar to look forward to?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Regularly check in with friends and family?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Still pursue your hobbies and interests?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Practice feeling hopeful and building acceptance?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Reach out for help when you feel overwhelmed?   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| • Accept that you can't do everything?  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

If you marked "No" more than a few times, consider what you need to change to make each "No" answer a "Yes." Start by finding a support group or talking to someone you trust. The IgA Nephropathy Foundation is here for you.

### You are not alone

**4.3 million**

Approximate # of caregivers in the U.S. who have provided unpaid care to an adult or child in the last year

**1 out of 5**

U.S. adults are caregivers, supporting a friend or family member with a health condition or disability

**40%**

Of caregivers report having symptoms of depression

**\$600 billion**

Approximate economic value (estimated) of family caregiver help

# Watch For and Report Signs of Caregiver Stress and Burnout

The pressure and demands of being a caregiver or care partner are very real. It's important to know what to watch for, so you know if you need to make changes to reset and give yourself renewed energy to support your loved one. It will also help you establish some healthy boundaries so the responsibilities and worries that come with caregiving don't take over.

When thinking about yourself and your role as a caregiver, have you had any of the below in the past year? (Check all that apply)

## Caregiver Stress

- Feel overwhelmed, worried
- Feel sad, alone, deserted by others
- Sleep too much or not enough
- Feel tired most of the time
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Lost interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Easily irritated; feel increasingly resentful
- Trouble concentrating
- Neglect responsibilities, including your own medical appointments
- Frequent headaches, body pains
- Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- Drinking too much alcohol

*Burnout occurs when stress is unaddressed and reaches complete physical, emotion and mental exhaustion.*

## Caregiver Burnout

*Caregiver / care partner burnout has many of the same signs and symptoms of caregiver stress. You'll know you've reached burnout if you also feel any of below:*

- Feel helpless, hopeless
- Overwhelming exhaustion
- Can't concentrate
- Can't sleep (or can't stop sleeping)
- Overly negative, irritable or hostile
- Don't care about anything/no energy
- Ignore responsibilities or put them off
- Can't relax
- Often sick
- Feel anxious and depressed
- Abuse alcohol, drugs or prescription medications

*If any of these apply to you, it's important to talk with your health care team or ask for help as early as possible.*

## Coping Skills

### What makes you feel overwhelmed?

To understand your coping skills and how you might strengthen them, first take a minute to think about what makes you feel overwhelmed. In your role caring for someone with IgAN, what has been most challenging?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### What's made you most sad?

Some people explain the sense of loss that comes with facing a chronic disease like IgA Nephropathy – loss of how things were before the diagnosis, changes to family dynamics, etc. How does this apply to you?

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### How do you deal with the stress?

When you are overwhelmed, do you cope in positive ways that lessen your anxiety, or negative ways that may provide a short-term release but ultimately only add to your stress?

Take some time to think about it and reflect. Check off the behaviors or habits that apply to you below and add any others that aren't listed. This will help you become more aware of how you are coping.

Remember that your emotional and mental health goes hand-in-hand with your physical health – and it's just as important. Take the time to tune into yourself and don't be shy about talking with a trusted friend or another caregiver or care partner or sharing your feelings at your next health visit.

#### Positive coping

- Focusing on what you can control/ accepting that you can't do everything
- Exercising
- Talking with friends
- Deep breathing/meditating
- Going to bed at a regular time and sleeping 7 to 8 hours a night
- Finding a support group/connecting with other caregivers/care partners
- Asking for help when you need it
- Staying engaged in hobbies
- Others:

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#### Negative coping





- Yelling
- Skipping meals
- Withdrawing from people or activities
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Escaping online (streaming, social media, gaming)
- Eating junk food
- Others:

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## Strategies to De-Stress

It's important to find ways to manage the stress and anxiety you may be feeling. When you do, think of them in these four areas: spiritual, emotional, physical, and social. Check any that you would like to prioritize or fill in ideas of your own for what has been most helpful in your role caring for someone with IgA Nephropathy. Post this page somewhere you can see it as a reminder to take time for you.

<p><b>Spiritual</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Yoga</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Meditation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Faith community</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reading</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</li> </ul> 	<p><b>Emotional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Support groups/therapy/ ask for help</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Interests, hobbies that provide a lift</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Time in nature</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Music _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</li> </ul> 
<p><b>Physical</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Aerobic exercise</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Strength training</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Low impact activities such as walking or stretching</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Competitive or recreational sports</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</li> </ul> 	<p><b>Social</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Outings with friends</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Planning impromptu get togethers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A date night with your partner</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Calls to people close to you</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other _____</li> </ul> 

## Asking for and Accepting Help

When you ask for help, not only does it lighten your load, it also gives the people you approach the chance to experience the lift that comes from lending a hand to someone in need. Use the space below to understand where you can let go and who in your life might be able to help you.

Things I can hand off and who can help:	Tasks I enjoy and don't want to give up:

For more information and support, visit [igan.org](http://igan.org) and be sure to join our monthly support call. Here you can also find our IgAN Mindful Moments to guide you through various forms of meditation, as well as mental health resources for your loved one.

