

# Caregiver Distress

## RISK FACTORS

Following, from the Home Instead Senior Care® network and Dr. Peter Vitaliano, stress expert at the University of Washington, are risk factors for caregiver distress. Those who succumb to caregiver distress are more likely to be:



### ► WOMEN CAREGIVERS

Women report more psychological distress than men. (Interestingly, male caregivers have more negative physiological responses to caregiving such as increased cholesterol, risk for obesity and immune impairment.)

### ► CAREGIVERS WHO SUFFER FROM A CHRONIC ILLNESS

Current chronic illness (such as coronary disease, hypertension, cancer) put caregivers at risk for poorer physiological health than otherwise healthier caregivers.

### ► CAREGIVERS OF A SPOUSE WITH ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Research conducted by Dr. Vitaliano has revealed that those who care for a spouse with Alzheimer's disease or another kind of dementia may face an increased risk of mental decline themselves. Dr. Vitaliano said the burdens of caregiving include many things – such as stress – that have been shown to increase the risk of cognitive decline.

### ► CAREGIVERS WHO LACK COPING SKILLS

Blaming others, blaming themselves and avoiding issues make caregivers more vulnerable. Counting one's blessings has shown to be a useful coping mechanism when a situation cannot be controlled such as caring for a loved one with a terminal illness or Alzheimer's disease.

### ► CAREGIVERS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY SOLVING PROBLEMS

Those who try to solve their problems or to find ways to make caregiving easier are better off.

### ► CAREGIVERS WHO LACK ADEQUATE RESOURCES

Financial resources help family caregivers develop a variety of options to better cope.

### ► CAREGIVERS WHO ARE NOT COMFORTABLE ASKING FOR HELP

Caregivers who won't ask for help are setting themselves up for the kind of exhaustion that can lead to distress.

For more information and resources, go to [CaregiverStress.com](http://CaregiverStress.com)®. Also, check out the resources of the Family Caregiver Stress Relief<sup>SM</sup> program at [FamilyCaregiverStressRelief.com](http://FamilyCaregiverStressRelief.com).