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# Ask the Expert Information Sheet

## Recognizing Caregiver Stress and Burnout

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Caring for a loved one can be very rewarding, but it also involves many stressful challenges such as changes in the family dynamic, household disruption, financial pressure, and the added workload. It makes sense that caregivers are some of the people most prone to burnout.

For people caring for brain tumour patients, caregiver stress can be particularly damaging since it can be a chronic, long-term issue. With patients surviving longer today due to advances in brain tumour treatments, you may face many years of caregiving responsibilities. Without adequate help and support, the stress of caregiving can leave you vulnerable to a wide range of physical and emotional problems.

When caregiver stress and burnout puts your own health at risk, it affects your ability to provide care to the patient. This can be detrimental to both you and the person you're caring for. It is important to recognize that caregivers need care too. Managing the stress levels in your own life is just as important as making sure your family member is comfortable, gets to their doctor's appointments regularly or takes their medication on time.

Learning to recognize the signs of caregiver stress and burnout is the first step to dealing with the problem.

### Common Signs of Caregiver Stress:

- Anxiety, depression, irritability
- Feeling tired and run down
- Difficulty sleeping
- Overreacting to minor nuisances
- New or worsening health problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Feeling increasingly resentful
- Drinking, smoking, or eating more
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Cutting back on leisure activities

Burnout is a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. Burnout usually happens when you feel overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands.

### Common Signs of Burnout:

- You have much less energy than you used to
- It seems like you catch every cold or flu that is going around
- You are constantly exhausted, even after sleeping or taking a break
- You neglect your own needs, either because you are too busy or you do not care anymore
- Your life revolves around caregiving, but it gives you little satisfaction
- You have trouble relaxing, even when help is available
- You are increasingly impatient and irritable with the person you are caring for
- You feel helpless and hopeless

Once you burnout caregiving is no longer a healthy option for either you or the person you are caring for. Therefore, it is important to watch for the warning signs of caregiver stress and burnout and make it a priority to take action right away once you recognize the problem.