

## Caregiver Fatigue Timeline

We know that caregiving takes its toll on individuals and families. The following timeline gives you an idea of when and how that happens, when you should seek help, and what can happen if you don't get any help. If you are a long-time caregiver, it may also explain some of your unexpected, out-of-character responses to people and situations. Please keep in mind that all caregivers are different, and physical and emotional responses to the stresses of caregiving may vary widely.

### 1 – 18 Months

- Anxious to provide the best possible care for loved one
- Manages the person with dementia
- Maintains house, garden, car, etc.
- Attends to family relations
- Keeps up appearances
- Helps the person with dementia through social situations
- Remains optimistic, caring, supportive
- Operates as “superwoman” or “superman”
- Attends to personal care

### At 21 Months

- Begins to take medication, usually for sleep and/or headaches
- Becoming more and more difficult to keep on top of things
- Some help from family is still available

### 24 – 32 Months

- Emotional and physical resources drained
- Less and less contact with personal doctor, dentist, minister, friends
- Experiences feelings of powerlessness
- Caregiving consumes the whole day and night
- Outside help dwindles away

### At 32 Months

- Stress becomes harder to conceal
- May begin to take tranquilizers
- Begins using medication for musculoskeletal pain
- Sleep is continually disturbed
- Becomes irritable more easily
- Has less and less contact with others

### By 38 Months

- Feels unhealthy
- Finds it hard to get up
- Never feels rested
- May have hypertension and/or colitis
- Has symptoms of chronic fatigue
- Loses the will to care for herself/himself
- Is unable to manage the household
- Rarely socializes with others
- Feels helpless, guilty, a failure

### After 50 Months

- Is in a chronic state of fatigue and “unwellness”
- Is often unable to ask for help or access resources for information and assistance
- Is isolated

*Source: Family Caregiver Support Project, Northwest Regional Council/Area Agency on Aging, Bellingham, WA*

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