

Caregiver Burnout Index

Caregiver burnout interferes with your ability to function. Burnout also raises your risk of chronic depression and other mental and physical ailments, from hypertension and flu to diabetes, stroke, or even premature death. Caregiver burnout is also a leading cause of nursing home placement, when run-down caregivers become too depleted to manage caregiving demands.

What's *your* caregiver burnout index? Answer the following 12 questions, add up your score. (A = 4 points, B = 3 points, C = 2 points, D = 1 point), and learn lifesaving strategies for managing the unique stress of caregiving.

1. How often do you get a good night's sleep (seven or more hours)?

- a. Every day
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Seldom or never

2. How often do you keep up with leisure activities that you enjoyed before caregiving?

- a. Every day
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Seldom or never

3. How often do you feel irritable or lose your temper with others?

- a. Seldom or never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often
- d. Every day

4. How often do you feel happy?

- a. Every day
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Seldom or never

5. How often do you find it difficult to concentrate?

- a. Seldom or never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often
- d. Every day

6. How often do you need a cigarette(s) or more than two cups of coffee to make it through the day?

- a. Seldom or never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often
- d. Every day

7. How often do you lack the energy to cook, clean, and take care of everyday basics?

- a. Seldom or never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often
- d. Every day

8. How often do you feel hopeless about the future?

- a. Seldom or never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often
- d. Every day

9. How often are you able to relax without the use of alcohol or prescription sedatives?

- a. Every day
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Seldom or never

10. How often do you feel overwhelmed by all you have to do?

- a. Seldom or never

- b. Sometimes
- c. Often
- d. Every day

11. How often has someone criticized your caregiving or suggested you're burning out?

- a. Seldom or never
- b. Sometimes
- c. Often
- d. Every day

12. How often do you feel that someone is looking after or caring for *you*?

- a. Every day
- b. Often
- c. Sometimes
- d. Seldom or never

How did you score?

This self-test isn't a scientific or diagnostic measure; it's meant to help you identify whether your stress level warrants taking steps toward better protecting yourself.

Add up your score. Each A = 4 points, B = 3 points, C = 2 points, D = 1 point.

48-42: Keeping your cool (low burnout risk)

Your heart and head are both in the right place, and your stress-busting reservoirs are full, which helps you to give with grace and good humor. That said, caregiver stress often creeps up without a caregiver realizing it. Protecting your healthful habits is paramount.

What to do: Keep yourself well fueled for caring by making time for yourself every day - at minimum, aim for several five-minute pick-me-ups for caregiver stress. If you're in a relationship, know that a healthy marriage or other close relationship can be a source of strength; learn how caregiving couples can make it work.

30-41: Feverish (elevated burnout risk)

You're likely managing caregiver stress reasonably well but falling into a common caregiver trap: Letting yourself sink lower on the daily priority list than is healthy for you. Everyone has an occasional crazy-busy day, but too many of them results in chronic stress -- which erodes well-being and places you at risk for depression, colds, and other illnesses.

What to do: Protect your time for self-care by learning seven ways to find more "me" time. On days when you're feeling stressed, try these [five ten-minute pick-me-ups](#).

18-29: Too hot to handle (high burnout risk)

Your stress level is probably sky-high. You may already be experiencing symptoms of anxiety, depression, compromised immunity, and physical exhaustion that can lead to or complicate chronic diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and chronic depression. It's critical that you take steps immediately to lower your stress level, ideally through a combination of better self-care, a shared workload, and outlets for your complicated emotions, including talk therapy and support groups.

What to do: In addition to the suggestions in the sections above, learn the [five real reasons you're stressed and how to tame them](#). Look into respite care options -- they're an important way to give yourself the break you need.

12-17: Toast (already burned out)

It's a wonder -- and a blessing -- that you were able to find and take this quiz. You're running on empty, or is it more like barely running? Although you want to do your best for the person you're caring for, realize that your own health is at stake -- and if you don't look out for Number One, you won't be able to help the person or persons in your care.

What to do: You need immediate help. Learn how to tell the difference between the normal stress of caregiving and depression and consult with someone you trust -- a doctor, clergyperson, counselor, or therapist, for counseling -- and seek out medical assistance. At minimum, you need a physical checkup. You may also benefit from other therapies or from a break from caregiving that's as short-term as a vacation or as permanent as a relocation of the person in your care.