



## **How Long-Distance Alzheimer's Caregivers Can Better Care for Their Loved Ones**

Out of the [nearly 16 million people](#) caring for someone with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia, many care for their loved one from afar. If you are a long-distance caregiver for a parent with this disease, it's sometimes hard to feel as though you're doing enough. It is possible to be an effective caregiver from far away, however. Here are some things you can do to ensure better care for your mom or dad.

### **Help them through their Medicare enrollment**

While basic Medicare plans (Part A and Part B) will cover a majority of your loved one's basic medical bills (except for long-term nursing home or in-home care), supplemental Medicare insurance can help boost their overall protection. Some advantage plans and even Medicare Part C and Part D can provide benefits toward prescription medication, dental and vision care, 24-hour nursing hotlines, transportation aid, and/or other senior wellness-focused programs. Medicare's [open enrollment](#) is October 15 through December 7, so as a long-distance caregiver you can walk them through this process.

### **Stay involved in their day-to-day care**

As a long-distance caregiver, your role - most of the time - is ringleader. Care manager, if you will. You have to be the one who schedules your parent's care when you are not around. How

much and what [type of care](#) your parent needs is entirely dependent on their condition, but it's likely to be a combination of assisted living, in-home care, temporary nursing care and daily checkups. Maintain daily contact with any and all caregivers. It's smart to keep a Google document or some other online note that involves you and all caregivers, so everyone is on the same page. Make use of telecommunication (Skype, FaceTime, [plenty more](#)) to keep in touch with caregivers and your loved one.

### **Control their bills and appointments**

Even higher-functioning Alzheimer's patients are going to struggle with recurring and short-term responsibilities - and it's only going to get worse as their disease progresses. From afar, you can handle 100 percent of their household and medical bills (electric, cable, gas, Internet, water, hospital, nursing care, etc.). Most all companies now allow paperless (online) payment services. You should also schedule their appointments, set reminders for yourself to remind them, and then follow up. You can even coordinate their transportation to doctor's appointments [from afar](#) through ride service apps like Uber and Lyft.

### **Make the most of your visits**

Even if you [live far away](#) from your parent with Alzheimer's, chances are you'll visit them at least a few times a year - maybe more. As their caregiver, it's your responsibility to make the most out of every single visit.

How do you do that? One way is to help them get their home in order (if they are still semi-independent). Managing each day is easier for Alzheimer's patients when they don't have to deal with too many distractions. You can streamline their daily life through a little downsizing and/or [decluttering effort](#) when you're visiting. This is also the time to talk with anyone providing care for your parent - nurses, in-home caregivers and neighbors. Get updates. Discuss their progress. Deal with any problems with their local care.

One final tip: Remember to take care of yourself. Long-distance caregiving is still caregiving, and taking care of a loved one with a cognitive disease is difficult. You must take time to focus on your own mental and physical well-being. Learn how to let go and let others help you. Eat right, exercise and focus on getting quality sleep. Any caretaker who forgets to take care of themselves will be less effective in taking care of others.

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