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National Family Caregiver Month: Taking Care of You!

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November marks National Family Caregivers Month, honoring the 50 million Americans who are caring for loved ones either full or part-time. Caregivers face a multitude of challenges and provide many different types of support including preparing nutritious and appealing food. Our publication, [Nutrition Tips for Caregivers](#), aims to offer assistance with this, hopefully easing caregiver burden.

Caregivers dedicate a lot of time and energy to helping others, but it is important that they take care of themselves as well. Included in this process are taking time to relax, sleeping well and eating nutritiously. Also, staying active and exercising can maintain good mental, physical and emotional health.

Although it is often difficult to remember to eat, caregivers should avoid skipping meals to maintain positive energy levels and to prevent feeling weak and tired. A good way to avoid skipping meals is to eat meals at the same time every day, as part of a routine. Consuming a balanced diet with a variety of foods during meal and snack times is beneficial because it ensures intake of many different nutrients. A balanced meal contains protein, healthy fat, starch, fruits and vegetables.

Staying hydrated is also essential, and can be achieved by drinking water and consuming fruits and vegetables throughout the day. Recommendations vary, but generally, six to eight 8-ounce cups of fluid per day is sufficient. Some fruits and vegetables with high water content include cantaloupe, watermelon, blueberries, oranges, cucumbers, iceberg lettuce, tomatoes and spinach.

Incorporating snacks is a good way to avoid excessive hunger and eventual overeating, especially for busy people. Some easy nutritious snacks include part-skim string cheeses, whole fruits, high fiber/protein bars and nuts (such as almonds, pecans, walnuts).

Lastly, getting a good night's sleep is critical for overall health. By feeling well rested, you are more prepared to help yourself and others both emotionally and physically. Furthermore, increasing research has shown that people who sleep more are more likely to weigh less and maintain a healthy weight.

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