

Family Caregivers Feel the Heat

Stressed Family Caregivers Look to In-Home Care Providers for Help

A recent study conducted by the Boomer Project for the Home Instead Senior Care® network of more than 1,600 adult caregivers revealed that nutritional risk factors for seniors are indicators of the stress levels of their caregivers, heightening the growing demand for in-home, non-medical care providers. In response to that research, Home Instead Senior Care, which has more than 850 franchises worldwide, partnered with national nutrition experts from the University of Maryland and the Duke University Medical Center to create the *Cooking Under Pressure* public awareness campaign.

According to the study of family caregivers, adult daughters – who typically serve as home cooks for seniors – say stress is especially high when they are caring and cooking for someone with several nutritional risk factors. This research, conducted by Home Instead Senior Care, found that of the caregivers who rated their lives as extremely stressful, 67 percent were caring for loved ones with three or more nutritional risk factors, compared with 33 percent of caregivers whose seniors had fewer than three nutritional risk factors.¹

Adult children caring for an older adult (with an average age of 81) reported the top three nutritional risks as:

1. Three or more prescribed or over-the-counter drugs per day.
2. An illness or condition that made the senior change his or her diet.
3. Having lost or gained more than 10 pounds in the past six months without trying.²

These figures prove the growing demand for senior caregiving services, such as medication reminders, meal preparation, light housekeeping, and companionship – all services that Home Instead Senior Care franchises provide.

That's why Home Instead Senior Care has partnered with national nutrition experts from the University of Maryland and Duke University Medical Center to promote healthy, stress-free grocery shopping and meal preparation tips and recipes for caring for seniors.

A result of this research is the *Cooking Under Pressure* handbook that is available free through any local Home Instead Senior Care office. The Foods for Seniors Web site provides additional information, research, and resources. Home Instead Senior Care conducts research along these lines at least once every quarter to ensure that franchise owners continually have resources to better the lives of seniors in their community.

Home Instead Senior Care CEO Paul Hogan said that risks associated with medication use and illness can negatively impact seniors' health and independence as they age. "Good nutrition is, in fact, the first line of defense in helping to keep seniors healthy and independent," said Hogan. "It's also the most ideal situation when family caregivers can receive some respite, like if a Home Instead CAREGiver is able to step in and help."

According to research, family caregivers are taking an active role in the lives of these seniors who need help, shopping and preparing meals for their older loved ones, which could be contributing to that stress, Hogan said. In the Home Instead Senior Care survey, 83 percent of family caregivers help with groceries or other errands; 65 percent assist with meal preparation.³

Hogan also said that companionship, one of Home Instead Senior Care's core services, is one ingredient that family caregivers don't want to leave out of a senior's meal plan. Companionship is vital to making mealtimes more engaging for an older adult as well as in alleviating the strain on family caregivers. "So many seniors are alone or lonely. If a love one can't be there to shop for groceries or eat with a senior, consider a congregate meal site – such as a senior center – a meal delivery program or a paid companion to help encourage older adults to develop the kind of nutritional habits that will keep them healthy and give you peace of mind."

Sources:

1, 2,3. The Boomer Project (www.boomerproject.com) completed online interviews with 1,279 U.S. adult caregivers, ages 35-62, with a parent, stepparent or older relative for whom they or someone in their household provides care. Questions regarding nutritional risk factors and stress adapted from Abbott Laboratories' "Determine Your Nutritional Health" checklist. Used with the permission of Abbott Laboratories, copyright 2008.

For more information about the research study or the effects of poor nutrition on the elderly, contact Dan Wieberg, public relations manager by phone at 888-484-5759 or by email at dwieberg@homeinsteadinc.com.