



GBS HEALTH & WELLNESS

# *Clinical Corner*

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## Volunteer Differently

Giving the gift of time often brings a few things to mind: volunteering at an organization, local food bank, homeless shelter, or chaperoning a child's school trip. This month, expand your definition of volunteer work by offering to help your aging relatives manage their health.

Giving someone the gift of your time may include caring for that person in a different way. You may have elderly parents, grandparents or even an aunt or uncle who could use help managing their health.

Conditions many elderly individuals experience include heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes. Living and managing one of these conditions requires consistent follow up with providers, medication management and an effort to modify lifestyle to prevent further complications. According to the National Council on Aging, about 95% of older adults

have at least one chronic condition and about 80% have two or more. Visit [NCOA.org](https://www.ncoa.org) with your loved one to determine how you can adequately help and prep them to manage their conditions.

It can be overwhelming to arrange appointments, manage prescriptions and organize transportation. The holidays can amplify these obstacles making it harder for your loved ones to receive proper care. Consider arranging transportation for their upcoming appointment, or scheduling prescription delivery. Sit with your loved ones and review their medications with them or refill their daily pill reminder boxes. You may discover that they are not taking doses correctly or are out of a medication and forgot to have their prescription refilled. Little things like this would benefit their health, not only from a medication standpoint, but from a social standpoint. Our aging relatives may feel

isolated, may not have a sense of belonging and may not feel they have a purpose in life. Spend time asking about their health, listening to their concerns, and assisting when you can. This could improve their mental health by showing them you care.

It's equally important to make time for self-care. Do you ever feel guilty for taking a break or that you don't do enough? Do you frequently feel rushed, anxious, or flustered? Do you find that you don't prioritize your health? Give yourself the gift of time. Time for yourself, just you and you alone, to do something relaxing, self-esteem boosting or enjoyable. What a great gift to give yourself!

Start with health checkups! Have you postponed appointments? Do you have a nagging feeling that abdominal pain is not quite normal? When was your last dental appointment? Prioritize your health and mark these tasks off your to-do list. Are you so rushed at the pharmacy that you barely hear what the pharmacist is discussing? Stop and take all the time you need to thoroughly understand why you are taking a medication and how the medication is going to work for you. Remember to ask about side effects, what to watch out for and when to call the doctor if you experience a side effect.

Many healthcare insurance carriers including Medicare, offer what is called a Comprehensive Medication Review (CMR) as part of a Medication Therapy Management Program (MTM). Pharmacists as well as other healthcare providers are trained to perform both services. A CMR is an annual interactive medication review to assess your medications, including over-the-counter and

herbal supplements. The goal of this type of review is educating the patient to self-manage their conditions and medications and to identify and address any problems or concerns that may arise. An action plan will be created which would include any recommendations to the provider or to the patient by the pharmacist. Check with your insurance carrier and your pharmacist to see if this service is part of your benefits. A typical CMR would last about an hour and is well worth the time!

Once you've crossed health checkups off your list, spend time enjoying your favorite hobbies. Take a leisurely walk through the woods. Find a new, inviting library and roam the aisles for a good book to read. Make time for a massage or one of your other favorite activities. It does require time and patience to take care of our individual health needs. If we do not make it a priority, we may be depriving our loved ones of time spent with them in the future.

**With you and your loved ones in mind, think about how you would like to give of your time this holiday season and make it worthwhile. Enjoy!**