Caregiver Support & Preventing Burnout

Understanding Caregiver Burnout

Caring for a loved one after illness or injury can be meaningful, but also physically and emotionally demanding. Caregiver burnout can occur when stress builds over time without enough rest or support, leading to fatigue, mood changes, and feeling overwhelmed. This is not a sign of failure, but a signal that support is needed.

Signs You May Be Experiencing Burnout

You may notice:

- Ongoing fatigue even after resting
- Increased irritability or feeling emotionally drained
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Pulling away from activities you normally enjoy

These are common signs that stress is exceeding your current support and recovery time.

Ways to Help Prevent Burnout

Small, consistent steps can help reduce stress over time:

- Take brief rest periods when possible throughout the day
- Prioritize sleep, hydration, and nutrition
- Accept help when it is offered, even for short breaks
- Focus on what is most important for “today” rather than everything at once
- Ask questions and use support from your rehab team (SLP, PT, OT, nursing, physicians)

Support Is Available

Support is available through several resources and is often most helpful when accessed early. Hospital social workers and case managers can help connect you with community resources, respite options, and discharge planning support. Your rehab team can also provide education and hands-on training to increase confidence with caregiving tasks. Caregiver support groups, in person or online, can offer connection and reassurance from others in similar situations.

When to Seek Additional Help

Reach out if you notice ongoing emotional distress, increasing anxiety or sadness, or difficulty managing daily responsibilities. Support is appropriate at any stage, and early help can prevent worsening burnout.