



THE ONTARIO

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How Technology Can Support Caregivers During COVID-19

Countries around the world are actively working to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. One strategy is social distancing or avoiding interaction with others. While this strategy is necessary, it can contribute to feelings of isolation and loneliness. This is true for family caregivers and the person they support. This tip sheet provides information about how technology can support caregivers in their roles should they become ill or need to self-quarantine, or if their loved one needs to be quarantined and access are restricted.

Introducing new technology and tools may be stressful for both the caregiver and care recipient. Consider what might work best for your situation. This may mean making fewer changes at once or taking a lower tech approach. For example, a simple phone call may be less stressful than setting up a video call and could be a preferred option when there are lots of other changes happening. Being open to new technology can also be frightening and viewed as a loss of independence. Consider presenting technology as a short-term strategy to prevent anxiety if self-quarantine is necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic.


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computers**

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shopping**

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This tip sheet was developed in collaboration with Maurine Parzen, RN, PhD, Professor, Faculty of Nursing. Maurine is a caregiver to her mother and her research focusses on supporting caregivers use of technology to sustain their caregiving role.

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Personal computers

If your care recipient has a personal computer and requires assistance from you, consider exploring remote desktop software. This would allow you to access your care recipients' computer without having to be physically there to help.

Smart devices

If you or the person you care for lives alone, you may find it beneficial to install smart home devices (also called home automation devices) around their home. Installing these smart devices can allow you to turn on lights, thermostat, or even a radio right from your smartphone. Common examples of smart home hubs that can control many devices by voice commands are Google Home and Alexa. One way to keep visually connected is to consider a security camera such as Nest Cam. This would allow you to visually see each other and communicate through the device as well.

Accessing entertainment

Smartphones can help guard against boredom by making games and audiobooks easily accessible to care recipients. Subscriptions to online media providers can also be accessed on smartphones via each company's app. Tablets such as iPads can also provide entertainment and with the bigger screen may be easier to see and use.

Consider eReaders such as kobo or Kindle as you can access several audiobooks & virtual books through your local library. These books can be accessed on a personal computer, iPad, tablet & smartphone. These devices can also be sanitized easily.

Online shopping

Consider limited access to public spaces and shop online. Many grocery stores now offer online shopping and delivery. This can be completed by the caregiver and sent to the care recipients' home.

Picture and video sharing

Smartphones make it easy to send and receive pictures and videos from loved ones. Smartphones also enable video chatting, which can enable your care recipient to stay connected with families, friends and community. Consider scheduling regular chats and online social gatherings with a variety of people for you and your care recipient.

Practical apps

Smartphones can provide entertainment, but they can also make life easier and more efficient. Apps can be used to ensure medication is taken on time and other activities stay on schedule. Communicate with your care team (circle of care) about relevant apps and information so they are apprised in case they need to step in and support your efforts.

Virtual assistants

iPhones and most Androids, and some smart home devices, come equipped with a virtual assistant. These personal assistants respond to voice commands and questions like, "Call Jenny," or "Remind me too..." Many people find this particularly useful, since they eliminate the need to type full sentences on the keypad and can help navigate a new phone.

iPhones come equipped with Siri, the Apple virtual assistant, while Android users can choose from a range of apps that perform similar tasks.