

FAMILY CAREGIVING DURING THE HOLIDAYS: HOW TO PROTECT YOUR FINANCES

For family caregivers, holiday costs may look less like stocking stuffers and more like extra groceries, prescriptions, gas or a smaller paycheck after taking time off to help someone you love.

Nearly one in four U.S. adults cares for a family member or friend, according to AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving. Their **2025 research** found that half of caregivers experience a negative financial impact and about one in four increase the amount of debt they owe.

Start With What Caregiving is Really Costing You

Review the last 30 days of checking and credit card activity for medications, supplies, extra groceries, gas, parking, and transportation. Additionally, lost income due to reduced hours or unpaid leave.

What remains after caregiving costs, bills and debt payments – not last year's spending – is your starting point for holiday spending. If little is left, scale back to what your caregiving budget can support.

Keep the Traditions that Matter. Skip Some of the Rest.

Keep the traditions your family loves – the big dinner, cookie exchange or favorite movie – and let some extras go. Draw names, host a potluck or make a movie or game night the main event. Simplifying can ease caregiving demands while keeping the holiday meaningful.

Also, you might simplify food options. Serve fewer dishes, ask everyone to contribute or center the gathering on an affordable favorite. These **lower-cost meal planning ideas** can help you spend less without making the holiday feel like a budget exercise.

Think Twice Before Putting the Holidays on A Credit Card

If caregiving already stretches your budget, holiday spending can strain it further.

Credit card accounts carrying interest averaged 22.15% in May 2026, according to the Federal Reserve. A holiday purchase can linger long after the decorations come down.

Before using a credit card, ask: Can I afford this now and pay it off before the new year? If not, **spend less or skip it**.

Look for Help with Caregiving Costs

- **Eldercare Locator**: Search by ZIP code or call 1-800-677-1116 for local respite care, transportation, meals and benefits counseling.
- **BenefitsCheckUp**: Find programs that may help with prescriptions, food, utilities, health care, housing and transportation.
- **211 caregiver support**: Call 211 or search online for local respite care, food, transportation, support groups, utilities and other help.
- **FMLA guidance for family caregivers:** Learn whether you qualify for unpaid, job-protected leave to care for a spouse, child or parent with a serious health condition.

- **VA caregiver assistance:** Caregivers of eligible Veterans may qualify for training, counseling, respite care, health coverage, travel assistance or a monthly stipend.

If Debt is Already Part of the Picture, Get Help Early

Ask for help before the situation feels unmanageable. Start with your financial institution.

You can also connect with GreenPath for **free financial counseling**. If you qualify, a **Debt Management Program** may help reduce interest rates, monthly payments and payoff time on eligible unsecured debt.

Caregiving already asks a lot of you. A simple celebration, outside support and an honest budget can leave more room for the people and moments that matter.

The Path to Financial Wellness Starts Here

GreenPath's NFCC-certified experts offer free financial counseling, online education, and a debt management program designed to help you save time and money. Call today.

877-337-3399

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