

# Caring Connections Chronicle

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## CONQUERING COMMON CAREGIVING CHALLENGES

### An introduction to podcasts:

A good friend recently shared with me that someone she loves very much had just been diagnosed with dementia. She wants to support her friend in the upcoming journey, and not make too many mistakes along the way. I suggested that she might like to visit our webpage at Dementia Dialogue and listen to some of our podcasts to help her get started on her learning curve. She looked a bit mystified. "I'm sorry, but I have no idea what podcasts even are. I don't spend much time on the Internet, except maybe email and a bit of Google and Facebook, so I'm not very tech savvy". I assured her that if she knew how to find her way around Facebook and Google, then listening to a podcast would be something she could handle.



Podcasts are often compared to informational radio "broadcasts" in that they are meant to be listened to like radio, but are online and usually accessed on iPods or other computer devices. Along the way, they've picked up the nickname "podcast". Frequently, a webpage will contain podcasts, so that you can first read about your topic of interest, look at photos or videos about it, and then listen to podcast interviews, panel discussions, tutorials etc. which further discuss and illuminate the topic at hand. Podcasts are available at any time you choose to listen, so you pick the time and subject, and off you go.

A good example of all of this is the webpage produced by Dementia Dialogue, which is the one I recommended to my friend. I provided her with the direct link online (<http://www.dementiadialogue.ca/>), but also reminded her that if she were to simply Google 'Dementia Dialogue', she would be directed to their main page, which contains information and links on all aspects of dementia. The many dementia-related podcasts feature interviews, panels and speakers from which she could choose those most helpful in her journey with her friend.

She called me the other day, excited to tell me that she'd discovered an app that came with her iPhone, that she'd never used, called Podcasts, and in there, neatly organized by category, was just about any podcast subject you could imagine, including Dementia Dialogue. Her earbuds and iPhone are now part of her daily walk, where she's not only learning a great deal that will be helpful in supporting her friend, but also venturing into a whole host of other subjects in the podcast universe.

### Other Podcast Listening Apps (For iOS & Android)

- Player FM
- Pocket Casts
- Castbox
- Podbean
- Stitcher
- Laughable
- TuneIn Radio
- Spotify

If it  
doesn't  
challenge  
you, it  
won't  
change  
you!



# Conquering Common Caregiving Challenges



## Medication Management

It's important to keep an up-to-date record of current medications, vaccines, allergies, and alternative and complimentary therapies that can be easily shared with the healthcare team. This is important because this record can:

- Decrease medication errors or bad reactions
- Help prevent allergic reactions
- Decrease how often you have to tell people this information
- Help your healthcare team better understand your complete healthcare journey

By recording this information, you will be able to quickly access and share this with members of the healthcare team.

## **What information do I need to record?**

### **Allergies and Sensitivities**

Throughout your healthcare journey, you will often be asked about any allergies you might have. Having a list that can quickly be accessed is an easy way to share this information. Healthcare providers will want to know about any type of reaction you might have had including reactions to medication, food, or the environment (e.g. seasonal allergies).

### **Medications, Complementary and Alternative Therapies**

Having a current medication list that can be quickly shared with your health team can help to reduce medication errors or bad reactions. This record is also helpful to healthcare providers as it provides the most up-to-date record of what medications are being taken and when. It's also important to include lists of vitamins or supplements, complementary and alternative therapies (such as massage or acupuncture), as these therapies are essential to consider in relation to medication and treatment plans.

## **Vaccines or Immunizations**

Immunization or vaccine history is another valuable resource to keep up to date. Healthcare providers will want to know which vaccines are up to date including influenza (the 'flu' shot), pneumonia and shingles vaccines. Keeping an up-to-date immunization record (such as the 'Yellow book') in this section is another option

## Understanding Your Medications

Did you know?? Medication errors or mistakes are most likely to happen when moving throughout the healthcare system – such as being admitted or discharged from hospital.

For this reason, organizations such as Patients for Patient Safety Canada and the Canadian Pharmacists Association have worked together to develop 5 questions to help patients and caregivers start a conversation with their healthcare team about their medications.

Use the questions below when talking with any member of your healthcare team about your medications. This includes doctors, nurses, and pharmacists.

## **5 Questions to Ask about your Medications**

1. Changes? Have any medications been added, stopped or changed, and why?
2. Continue? What medications do I need to keep taking, and why?
3. Proper Use? How do I take my medications, and for how long?
4. Monitor? How will I know if my medication is working, and what side effects do I watch for?
5. Follow-Up? Do I need any tests and when do I book my next visits?

This article has been adapted from the Ontario Caregiver Organization. For more information, along with examples of how to keep track of your medications, please check out the resource "[My Health Care Journey Binder](#)" or download:

<https://ontariocaregiver.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Healthcare-Journey-Medications.pdf>

# 5 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR MEDICATIONS

when you see your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

## 1. CHANGES?

Have any medications been added, stopped or changed, and why?

## 2. CONTINUE?

What medications do I need to keep taking, and why?

## 3. PROPER USE?

How do I take my medications, and for how long?

## 4. MONITOR?

How will I know if my medication is working, and what side effects do I watch for?

## 5. FOLLOW-UP?

Do I need any tests and when do I book my next visit?



Keep your medication record up to date.

### Remember to include:

- ✓ drug allergies
- ✓ vitamins and minerals
- ✓ herbal/natural products
- ✓ all medications including non-prescription products

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to review all your medications to see if any can be stopped or reduced.



Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists



Société canadienne des pharmaciens d'hôpitaux

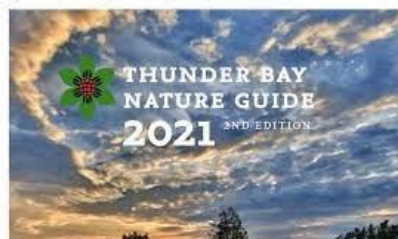


Visit [safemedicationuse.ca](http://safemedicationuse.ca) for more information.

## Book Review:

Thunder Bay Nature Guide 2021 2<sup>nd</sup> edition  
Thunder Bay Field Naturalists Club

Submitted by: Susan Bithrey



Remember travel? Couldn't you just weep with longing for it to come back? We're all looking for ways to extend our horizons a bit, whether to escape the endless Covid lockdowns, or perhaps simply for some respite from the rigours of caregiving. Or both. Maybe there's a way to do that without venturing too far from home. Hiking, anyone?

The Thunder Bay Nature Guide might be a good place to start, to let your imagination loose in planning a day trip or even a few hours tramping about in the beautiful geography of northwestern Ontario.

This is a beautiful and practical handbook (coil bound and small enough to fit neatly in a back pack) that catalogues the many hiking opportunities in Thunder Bay Region, stretching roughly from Ruby Lake Provincial Park west to Silver Falls and south to Pigeon River. It is published by, and available from, the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists Club (<https://tbfm.net>)

Some twenty Nature Sites are included, with clear details outlining How to Get There and Key Features (flora and fauna, geology etc.), a trail map and stunning photos of the area. There are also background articles on such topics as our local butterflies, salamanders, dragonflies, ticks and orchids as well as an introduction describing the richness of the rugged landscapes right at our doorsteps.

If long distance travel or even hiking aren't possible right now, perhaps you could consider a picnic lunch under a tree in your own back yard, with this little book. Even if circumstances won't allow you to actually go, the book is such a treat to browse, and perhaps share with the person you are caring for so they can dream too – that the time spent imagining a trek could be almost as satisfying as the trek itself. Happy trails!

*Mutually caring relationships require kindness and patience, tolerance, optimism, joy in the other's achievements, confidence in oneself, and the ability to give without undue thought of gain. We need to accept the fact that it's not in the power of any human being to provide all these things all the time. For any of us, mutually caring relationships will also include some measure of unkindness and impatience, intolerance, pessimism, envy, self-doubt, and disappointment.*

*The World According to Mister Rogers.*



## Laughter Therapy



How to reap the benefits of laughter, you don't even need to be happy or have a reason to laugh. Faking it works just fine. The body cannot differentiate between fake and real laughter; you get the same physiological and psychological benefits. We change physiologically when we laugh. We stretch muscles in our face and body, our pulse and blood pressure go up, and we breathe faster, which sends more oxygen to our tissues.

The American School of Laughter Yoga recommends the following laughter exercises that caregivers can try at home. You can experiment with these exercises for 30 seconds or a few minutes at a time—whatever feels good to you.

**Gradient Laughter:** Fake a smile, giggle and then laugh slowly. Gradually increase the tempo and volume of your laughter.

**Hearty Laughter:** Spread your arms out beside you, look up and laugh heartily from deep down inside.

**I Don't Know Why I Am Laughing:** Laugh (faking it is perfectly fine) and shrug your shoulders as you look at yourself in a mirror. Use your eyes and body language to convey the message that you have no idea why you are laughing!

**Find Your Laughter Center:** Probe your head with one finger as if looking for your laughter center. Imagine that each spot you push on triggers a different type of laughter and then act it out.

**Conductor Laughter:** Imagine you are a conductor. Direct an imaginary orchestra with enthusiastic arm movements as you sing a song of your choice in laughter sounds only, such as “ho ho ho” or “ha ha ha.”



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