A kidney transplant is a life-saving — and life-altering — gift for both the recipient and their caregivers. It comes with great responsibilities: Long before a transplant occurs, as a caregiver you’ll be driving to doctor’s appointments, learning about and managing medications, shoring up spirits and much more. It’s a lot to take on. These tips and suggestions from the Ochsner Multi-Organ Transplant Institute — ranked #1 in the nation by CareChex for medical excellence for organ transplants — may help lessen your stress.

1. Stay healthy for your sake — and theirs.
After their kidney transplant, the patient’s immune system will be suppressed by medication to reduce the chances that the new organ is rejected or attacked as an “intruder.” Your physical good health keeps you strong so you are able to care for the patient.

2. “Me time” is mandatory.
The physical and emotional demands of caregiving may affect your health. Make a date with friends for lunch, or an evening at the movies … anything not related to your role as a caregiver. Don’t let your loved one’s condition overwhelm or define you.

3. Develop a strong support system.
Primary caregivers of kidney transplant patients can feel overwhelmed by their responsibilities. Don’t be afraid to ask for help! Seek out caregiver support groups, vent to a friend, or seek professional counseling.

4. Be an active advocate.
Being a caregiver is about learning. It’s important to participate in your loved one’s education during the transplant journey.

After a kidney transplant, learn which foods your loved one needs to avoid while taking immunosuppressant medications, and are there any specific nutrition needs or challenges? Knowing the answers will help you be rest assured that you’re providing the best possible care. Our transplant team can help.

5. Embrace technology.
Technology can help you stay organized and keep track of your care responsibilities. Need to coordinate in-home care … or ask friends for help pulling together tonight’s dinner? There’s an app — or a website, or a gadget — for those and more. Being able to balance your caregiver responsibilities will help you keep your loved one healthy.

6. Constantly communicate.
Caregiving can be stressful, and may be more manageable with good communication. It helps when the patient and caregiver agree on each person’s roles, responsibilities and boundaries. Feel free to discuss whether these need to be adjusted as situations arise. Be respectfully honest with each other about your feelings.

7. Give yourself a pat on the back.
Being a caregiver may be exhausting work. Be as compassionate to yourself as you are to others.

You are there for your loved one, and we are here for you.
Call today to speak with a member of the Ochsner Multi-Organ Transplant Institute team:

800-643-1635