

## **Is spousal caregiving associated with an increased risk of frailty?**

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Many caregivers of older patients are spouses who are old themselves. In many aspects, their mental, social and physical health may be at the core of successful caregiving.

In this context, the CAREGIVER study aimed at assessing the health of older spousal caregivers in Wallonia.

The difficulties encountered by the spousal caregivers involved primarily disruption of their activities and feeling of social isolation. Older spousal caregivers were less likely to engage in preventive health behaviours: not finding enough time for outdoor activities, for adequate rest and sharing meals together.

Compared to controls, caregivers were at higher risk of malnutrition and frailty. More precisely, caregivers were more likely to be in a pre-frail stage, which is identified as a high risk of progressing to frailty. The difference was especially shown in the criteria of unintentional weight loss and low physical activity.

On the other hand, the subjective measurement of the experience of the caregiver, assessed with the burden, seems to be associated with interesting outcomes such as nursing home admission of the care-receiver.

This study also supported the role of protective factors against the caregiver's burden. We observed that caregivers who find caregiving meaningful, manageable and comprehensive are likely to be less negatively affected by caregiving. This personal coping resource can be used in stressful situations to maintain positive health and achieve well-being.