

Tips for carers

- Carers are people who look after a family member or a friend with a health condition or disability
- The amount of time spent caring for someone could be from a few hours a week to caring for someone 24 hours a day
- This information sheet provides some tips to help you, the carer, look after yourself and the person you're caring for

Call our National Help Line on 1800 263 265

Support

- Make sure that you make time for yourself and look after your own health. You're more able to care for someone when you're in good shape - physically, mentally and emotionally.
- Helping someone maintain their independence is a big part of a care relationship. It's important that you work together to achieve this. There are many tools and organisations available to assist you with this. See the 'support services' at the end of this article for more information.

Appointments

- Discuss with the person you're caring for, the role they would like you to take when attending appointments. For example, are they happy for you to ask questions, or would they prefer you provide silent support.
- It's a good idea to go to appointments together with a list of questions you'd like to ask. Also consider booking a longer appointment if you have lots of questions to ask.
- Attending appointments with the person your caring for also ensures that you're aware of any changes to treatment.

Emotions

- As a carer you may experience a range of emotions and these can be difficult to deal with. Be aware of your emotions. If you need help seek assistance and discuss your situation with your GP or a psychologist or the National Carer Counselling Program.



- It's sometimes hard for carers to understand why the person they're caring for may not follow suggestions made to them by health professionals such as regular exercise or taking medications as prescribed. Try to encourage - but not push or nag - the person you're caring for. They'll do things in their own time and when they're ready.
- The person you're caring for may also experience a range of difficult emotions. Be aware of this, and if you think they're affecting their quality of life, raise the subject with them and suggest they speak with their doctor.

Make things easier

- Access services. There are many services available that can help make things easier for you and the person you're caring for. The Commonwealth Home Support Program (formerly HACC) provides a variety of services including Delivered Meals, Respite Care, Domestic Assistance, Community Transport and much more. Contact My Aged Care or your local council for more information.
- Pace yourself. Instead of cleaning the whole house at one time, stagger the cleaning over several days. Cook meals in larger batches, so that you can freeze the leftovers for days when you don't feel up to cooking or you have run out of time.
- Investigate aids, gadgets and home modifications. Simple things like long handled shoe horns can allow the person you're caring for to put on their own shoes. Items such as grab rails in the bathroom can make bathing easier and safer.
- Talk with an OT. There are a lot of options out there to make life easier for you both. To find out more, talk with an occupational therapist.

Sharing the care

- Caring, while rewarding, can at times be very hard work. It's important that there are others who can share the work to make it easier for the main carer. This help could be in the form of cleaning or shopping, or just being available for you to talk to.
- As a carer you need to know your limits and boundaries. For example, if you're unable to lift the person you're caring for seek alternative devices or assistance to make things easier. Occupational therapists can assess the home and make suggestions about modifications, aids and equipment.

Carer Payment and Carer Allowance

- You may be eligible to receive benefits from Centrelink, especially if you're unable to work or must work fewer hours due to your caring role.

Medication

- Find out about medication the person you're caring for is taking; the type, the dose, any possible side effects.
- It's easy to forget to take medications regularly, especially if there are more than one and they're taken at different times of the day. If this is a problem talk to your pharmacist about using a pill dispenser. They contain individually sealed compartments to help make taking medication easier. Your local pharmacist can be a great source of advice in this area.
- You can also arrange with the pharmacist to do a home medication review.

Planning ahead

- It's important to think about powers of attorney and guardianship in the event that the person you're caring for is no longer able to make their decisions known. Planning ahead is vital to ensure that their wishes are met. It also means that they can make any necessary plans.
- See the links to Carers Victoria and the Public Advocate for more information.

How we can help

Call our National Help Line and speak to our nurses
Phone 1800 263 265 or email helpline@move.org.au

Visit our website move.org.au for information on:

- muscle, bone and joint conditions
- ways to live well with a muscle, bone and joint condition
- our new resource *Managing your pain: An A-Z guide*
- programs and services
- peer support groups
- upcoming webinars, seminars and other events.

More to explore

- **Carers Victoria**
www.carersvictoria.org.au or call 1800 242 636
- **Respite Victoria**
www.respitevictoria.org.au
- **Lifeline**
Call 13 11 14 for 24 hour crisis support, information and referral
- **My Aged Care**
www.myagedcare.gov.au
- **National Carer Gateway** www.carergateway.gov.au
- **Public Advocate - Powers of Attorney**
www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/powers-of-attorney
- **Centrelink**
www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/centrelink
- **Home and Community Care (HACC)**
www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc
- **Occupational Therapy Australia**
www.otaus.com.au

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