

Taking a break

This help sheet is about the importance of taking a break from caring, how to organise it and who can help.

Taking a break is important for families and carers

Caring for someone with dementia can be rewarding. It can also be physically and emotionally tiring, as well as stressful. Regular breaks can help you to:

- maintain your physical and mental health
- relax and recharge
- go out
- maintain family and social connections
- attend to business and home duties
- enjoy hobbies and activities or go on holiday.

You may feel it's hard to think about taking a break because you:

- put your own wellbeing last
- feel you don't deserve a break
- don't know what help is available
- are too tired to try
- would like a break, but the person you care for does not understand why
- lack confidence in the ability of others to provide the right care
- feel it's too much trouble
- believe you should always provide all the care.

But it's important that you take regular breaks to look after your health and wellbeing and provide better care.

There are different ways to plan a break. It depends on what suits you and your family.

Family members and friends might be happy to spend time with your loved one so you can take a break. You may only have to ask them. Or you could investigate respite programs.

Taking a break is important for people with dementia

We want to help people living with dementia to live as well as possible. Maintaining social connections and activities are important to keep the person from feeling isolated.

You can encourage or support them to:

- enjoy hobbies and activities
- socialise with other people
- get out and about in the community
- get to know other people providing support or care
- plan holidays or weekends away to look forward to.

Respite care

Respite means taking a break and can range from a few hours to a few days or longer. Respite care can be arranged on a regular or occasional basis, or in emergency situations.

There are government-funded respite programs depending on needs, eligibility and what services are available in your area. Respite is also available from respite care services including church groups, local councils and community groups.

Types of respite care:

- In-home respite, with a care worker coming to your home during the week, weekend, or overnight. They may also accompany the person with dementia to an activity they enjoy.
- Out-of-home respite, with group activities in local day centres. These offer planned care and social engagement for a few hours to several days a week, with some offering extended hours, weekend or overnight care.
- Residential care respite, with temporary overnight stays of several days or longer.

Non-government respite care is also available.

Planning for a positive respite experience

Often people living with dementia find new people and places unsettling. Planning can help create a positive respite experience.

It can be useful to:

- Get your family used to regular respite by accessing support as early as possible.
- Start with short breaks and build up to longer ones.
- Get practical ideas about respite by talking with other carers, families and support services.

Talk to your loved one in simple terms about the positive aspects of respite, so that it is something they can look forward to. If they are anxious, reassure them and let them know you are positive about the break, even if you're feeling a little anxious yourself.

Where to get help

There are many places that can help you. People at the following organisations can talk with you about:

- your feelings and emotional barriers to taking a break
- planning a break
- understanding what is available.

National Dementia Helpline

The National Dementia Helpline is a free telephone service that provides information and advice. Ask about support groups and programs for family and carers.

Call: **1800 100 500**

Visit: dementia.org.au/helpline

Carer Gateway

Carer Gateway provides practical information, resources, education and counselling to support carers and can assist with organising emergency respite.

Call: **1800 422 737**

Visit: carergateway.gov.au

My Aged Care

Depending on eligibility, My Aged Care provides support and assistance with home and community care and respite options for people aged 65 and over.

Call: **1800 200 422**

Visit: myagedcare.gov.au

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

Depending on eligibility, funding is available to support people living with dementia who are aged under 65.

Call: **1800 800 110**

Visit: ndis.gov.au

Additional reading and resources

- Dementia Australia library service
Visit: dementia.org.au/library
- Dementia Australia support
Visit: dementia.org.au/support/family-and-carers
- Dementia Australia education
Visit: dementia.org.au/education/family-carers-and-family-members

Further information

Dementia Australia offers support, information, education and counselling.

National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500

For language assistance: 131 450

Visit our website: dementia.org.au