

The Wellness Guide

for carers of people with a disability



Deakin University School of Nursing

Deakin University + Department of Human Services
(BSWR) Partnership

The *Wellness Guide for Carers of people with a disability* is a joint production of Deakin University and the Department of Human Services, Older Persons Health Promotion Program.

Authors: Helen Fennessy, Beverley O'Connell and Susan Bailey
Published by Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria 3217, Australia
First published 2004

© This Guide is based on The Wellness Guide, copyrighted by The Regents of the University of California. Content specific to The Wellness Guide for Carers Geelong/Australian context is copyrighted by Deakin University and Department of Human Services 2004.

Produced and printed by Learning Services, Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria 3217, Australia
National Library of Australia
Cataloguing-in-Publication data

Fennessy, Helen
The wellness guide for carers: ideas for living and staying well

ISBN 0 7300 2613 2

1. Caregivers - Health aspects - Australia. 2. Caregivers - Services for - Australia.
3. Exercise - Health aspects. I. O'Connell, Beverley. II. Bailey, Susan. III. Deakin University. School of Nursing. IV. Victoria. Dept. of Human Services. V. Title.

362.10230994

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation to the carers and their families who have been involved in the development of the Wellness Guide for sharing their experience and wisdom. These people know what it's really like to be a carer and have given generously of their time in order to help others who find themselves in a caring role.

Special thanks to:

Older Persons Health Promotion Program Centre, Department of Human Services for generously funding the project.
Tony Blackwell, Helen Walsh, Di Calleja, Margaret Thomas, Jane Price, Jenny Everist and Ralph Menchise, Department of Human Services
Rosemary McKenzie, Lucio Naccarella and Andrew Stewart, Centre for Health Program Evaluation
Joanne Walters and Robyn Beavis, Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre, Barwon Health
Sandy Austin, Barwon Primary Care Forum
Anne Muldowney, Carers Victoria
Sally Wall, Karingal Community Programs
Betty Lorkin, Helen Tinning, Pathways Carer Support Program
Kris Spark, Beth Stevenson, Seniors Information Victoria
Arlene Walker, Coordinator, Stage One of the Older Carers' Health and Wellbeing Project, Deakin University
Darren Baker, Graphic Designer and Donna Edwards, Photographer, Deakin Knowledge Media Division
S. Leonard Syme, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Epidemiology and James T. Nguyen, Managing Editor
Center for Community Wellness at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Public Health for providing resources in adapting the Wellness Guide model.

The Deakin University Research Team for the Older Carers Health and Wellbeing Project is Professor Bev O'Connell, Associate Professor Susan Bailey, Project Officer Helen Fennessy and Research Fellow Dr Rona Bound.
For enquiries about the Project contact the School of Nursing, Geelong Waterfront Campus on (03) 5227 8407.

Contents >

Introduction.....	4
How to use the Guide.....	4
01 Being a ‘Carer’	6
02 Caring relationship.....	8
03 Healthy body.....	10
04 Getting older.....	12
05 Exercise	14
06 Good food guide.....	16
07 Sleeping well.....	18
08 Hearing and seeing.....	20
09 Healthy mind	22
10 Managing stress.....	24
11 Personality and coping.....	26
12 Social contact and activities.....	28
13 Personal safety.....	30
14 Respite	32
15 Help is available.....	34
16 Planning your circle of support	36
17 Planning for the future	38
18 Using the internet	40
Resources	42
Print and audio visual resources.....	47
Notes.....	48

Introduction

The Wellness Guide for carers of people with a disability is an easy-to-use directory containing helpful information and handy hints on:

- how to live and stay well
- where to find information on health-related topics
- how to seek help from available community services.

We have developed this Guide in conjunction with carers. The Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre Southern Metropolitan Region hopes you find this Guide helpful and easy to use.

How to use the Guide

Each topic is discussed over two pages. It has a number of sections:

1 A summary of the main issues as seen by the carers and ‘direct quotes using the carers own words.’ *All the agencies suggested for contacting are in italics.*

2 Handy hints

HANDY HINTS

- dot point ideas for action

3 Where to find help

Where to find help

A list of the services and agencies mentioned on this page:

- local telephone numbers in the Southern metropolitan region
- 1800 freecall and statewide phone numbers
- websites

Ring them up or look at their websites to get the extra information you need and to ask for these services to assist you directly. They are there to help you!

4 Your notes

YOUR NOTES

Write down extra information to build up your own knowledge about health and useful resources, and make the Guide work for you.

Help for using the Guide

- You don't have to read it all in one go, just the pages that are relevant to you at the time.
- The information here is also relevant to the person you care for, so use these ideas to benefit their health and wellbeing too.
- A Resource index at the back of the book lists all information referred to in the 'Where to find help' sections. This is a quick way of getting phone numbers and web addresses.
- There is a Notes page at the back of the book to add extra hints and contacts you discover.

We hope the Guide helps you to look after your own health and wellbeing and makes it easier to find the information you need as a carer.

A carer is someone who provides unpaid care for a relative or friend with care and support needs. Without a carer, it is unlikely that this person would be able to remain living in the community. Many people find it difficult to think of themselves as a 'carer'. The term is used by support and service agencies and in local, state and federal politics to define a person taking on the important role of caring for a person with a disability.

'People who become carers can find it hard to adjust. It is OK to be upset.'

Many carers prefer to be seen in terms of their primary relationship with the person they care for, that is as a parent, a partner or spouse, a son or daughter, a friend. There is no set definition for being a carer. Each person's age, gender, cultural background, relationship, socioeconomic status and so on is different. While services, supports and government agencies, and indeed this book use the word carer, it is important to acknowledge the individuality of each person who takes on a caring role.

Not just a Carer

Some carers find it difficult to think of themselves as a 'carer' due to their many other roles. Most carers are also parents, spouses or partners, friends, siblings, employees, or club members. It is important to acknowledge, and give equal importance and attention to all the different roles you play in life.

Feelings

You may become a carer the moment your child is born with a disability. You may become a carer for a person whose disability has occurred later in their life. Regardless, you may experience a wide range of feelings—shock, sadness, anger, grief and loss. It may be helpful to seek counselling to discuss these feelings and to help adjust to the changes in your life. Talk to your general practitioner about a referral to a psychologist. Call *Carers Victoria* for free telephone counselling or call a social worker.

Adjustment for all involved

'It is difficult to lose your independence. It was a huge adjustment for all of us.'

If the disability has occurred from birth, the person you care for may feel frustration at their lack of independence. If the disability has occurred later, they may be experiencing many changes and a wide range of feelings about their loss of independence.

'I have found peace of mind by reading about the disability.'

Be involved with them, try to understand their needs and allow them as much independence as possible. Seek help early if you are worried that their behaviour seems erratic or they have become withdrawn or moody.

HANDY HINTS

- Acknowledge that you have many roles, one of which is as a carer
- Acceptance of a caring role comes with time
- People with disabilities often have trouble coping with change so stick to familiar habits when possible
- Find a general practitioner or other health professional who will explain the condition you are dealing with in ways you understand. Ask questions and get them to keep you up-to-date
- Decide whether to have your own general practitioner or use the same one as the person you care for
- Keep a diary of health issues and changes to take with you to appointments
- Learn about the medication required by the person you care for
- Medications can be sorted into a 'dosette' box according to the time and day they need to be taken. A pharmacist can do this for you or you can do it yourself
- Go to relevant information sessions if you have the time and energy
- If you became a carer because of a transport accident you may be eligible to lodge a claim with the Transport Accident Commission (TAC)
- Always seek medical advice if you have concerns about any changes or problems
- Always ask what costs are involved and keep a record
- Contact your local Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre for emotional support and respite assistance

YOUR NOTES

Where to find help

Careline/Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre
1800 059 059

Carers Victoria 1800 242 636

Commonwealth Carelink Centre 1800 052 222

Community Health Centres/Hospitals/Local
Government/Psychologists in the Yellow Pages

Nurse On Call 1300 606024

Transport Accident Commission 1800 332 556

Your GP

Websites

www.carersouth.org.au

www.carersvic.org.au

www.commcarelink.health.gov.au

www.respitesouth.org.au

www.yellowpages.com.au



Choices in caring

Being a carer is not usually a deliberate choice for most people. Whether or not you have chosen to be a carer and how you undertake your role can make a difference to your health and wellbeing.

‘You are entitled to a life—it’s not all about the person you care for. Create some independence for yourself.’

What is it really like to be a carer?

‘Caring for someone with a disability takes effort, time and patience.’

It is important to consider the long-term nature and complexity of some caring roles. Many carers feel that their families and friends do not really understand what it is like to be a carer. They do not realise the demands that are placed on a carer 24 hours a day. The carer support agencies listed can provide information on caring, to help you and others understand this complex role.

‘When times are hard, tell others not to expect too much of you.’

Dependence

‘I’m a security blanket for him—he always likes me to be there.’

Caring for someone with a disability can become very demanding. It is important for you and the person you care for to retain some independence from each other. This may involve making sure you keep up with interests of your own, see friends and have time away from each other. It may also mean making sure that you are not the only person who knows how to care for them. Make sure that others are helping whenever they can, and that the person does all they can for themselves too.

Carer, plus other roles

‘You have to learn new skills.’

Many carers may need to work as well to do all the household tasks, like cooking, cleaning, home maintenance and book keeping, even if these jobs were not their role before they became a carer. Enrolling in a class at your local community centre could help with learning new skills. Talk to your local *Carer Respite Centre* so you can attend classes.

HANDY HINTS

- Be clear about your role as a carer
- Know your limits and learn to say 'no'
- Find out where to go for help
- Take care of yourself and your other relationships
- Recognise and discuss your needs with each other, your family and friends and tell them that you need time out to do things for yourself
- You may be faced with having to make decisions about major changes, such as leaving work or moving house. Don't rush, and get relevant advice
- Never try to do too much at once
- Be a little bit selfish with your time and put yourself on top of the list occasionally
- Set routines can be helpful, but be flexible as things often change
- Take advantage of offers of help or outings that you can manage
- Have a few backstop people and put their contact numbers in your telephone memory pad
- Have shared pleasures with the person you care for, like listening to music, reading, looking at photos or sitting in the garden
- Focus on the positives
- Plan for the future (see page 36)
- Encourage the person you care for to engage in a recreation or leisure program to give you a break and increase their independence

YOUR NOTES

Where to find help

Careline/Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre
1800 059 059

Carer Counselling Line

Carers Victoria 1800 242 636

Commonwealth Carelink Centres 1800 052 222

Community Centres in the Yellow Pages

Relationships Australia

Websites

www.carersouth.org.au

www.carersvic.org.au

www.commcarelink.health.gov.au

www.familyrelationships.gov.au

www.relationships.com.au

www.respitesouth.org.au



‘Take care of yourself. You can’t look after anyone if you’re in poor condition.’

Being a carer puts a further strain on your health and sometimes prevents carers from seeking health treatment. It is really important to have regular medical check ups and to use both prescribed and ‘over the counter’ non-prescription medication safely.

What can I do?

‘Always talk to your doctor about health worries—not the person over the road!’

As well as eating well and exercising regularly, there are many things you can do to maintain health. Ignoring problems is not one of them!

Healthy heart—1 2 3 4

1 Quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do to reduce the risk of heart disease. The *Quitline* is a telephone service providing information and support for smokers who want help with quitting and for people who are concerned about family or friends who smoke.

2 Alcohol in moderation. Drinking alcohol can make you feel more tired and affect your judgement. As a carer, you may rarely find the time to rest or sleep off the effects of drinking alcohol. If you are drinking alcohol, stick to just a couple of drinks. Drink other fluids, like water or juice, at the same time to prevent dehydration. Check with your doctor if you are taking medications to see if there are any risks associated with taking your medication and drinking alcohol.

3 Lose weight if you need to. Healthy eating and being physically active will assist weight loss and improve blood pressure levels. The Heart Foundation *Heartline* can help with dietary advice.

4 Keep active: try to do at least three physical activities per week. Joining a group for exercise or sport can be fun as well as keeping you fit. (see Ch 5)

Back care

Many carers have to provide physical assistance to the person they care for in activities of daily living, like showering and dressing. It is important to use physical handling techniques and the most suitable equipment. A physiotherapist can advise you on safety and appropriate aids and equipment.

Continence

Good bladder habits are important at any age, for a healthy lifestyle. Try to drink at least 6 to 8 cups of water or other fluids a day (unless otherwise advised by your doctor). Juice, cordial, soft drink, milk and jelly can all be counted as fluids. Limit the amount of caffeine and alcohol you drink. Do regular pelvic floor exercises—men as well as women!

HANDY HINTS



- Your own health is important, so have a regular check up
- It is never too late to make healthy lifestyle changes
- Don't put off visiting your doctor because of your carer commitments
- Find a general practitioner who listens to you
- Carefully follow instructions for prescription medication and use only as directed
- For information about medicines call Medicines Line
- Seek advice from relevant allied health professionals as needed and follow this advice
- Contact the National Continence Helpline for pelvic floor instruction leaflets and the public toilet map
- If alcohol is causing you problems call the Australian Drug Foundation
- If you have a chronic illness attend a Better Health Self-Management course at a Community Health Centre
- Have a rest and relax when you can
- Use services such as respite to help you in your caring role

Where to find help



Australian Drug Foundation 1800 069 700
Careline/Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre 1800 059 059
Community Centres—exercise classes
Heartline 1300 362 787
Medicines Line 1300 888 763
National Continence Helpline 1800 330 066
Physiotherapists see Community Health Centres in Resources
Quitline 131 848
Your GP

Websites

www.adf.org.au
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
www.contfound.org.au
www.heartfoundation.com.au
www.quit.org.au
www.toiletmap.gov.au

YOUR NOTES

Life stages

‘We have a beginning and an end.’

The human life span is about 85 years, with a maximum life duration of about 115 years. People are now living longer, so more attention needs to be given to quality of life. A key characteristic of older people today is their youthful outlook. They do not see themselves as being old.

‘Getting old is all in the mind—if you don’t look in the mirror! Ageing has little to do with what the calendar says.’

What will happen to you as you age?

‘It is different for everybody.
It can creep up on you gradually.’

No two people age in the same way. Ageing causes changes in physical appearance and function. As you age, the likelihood of having some health impairment increases. Carers are even more likely to experience health problems as they age. If you are worried about a health problem that is not a normal part of ageing, seek medical advice. If you are advised to use aids, like a walking stick or frame, then do so.

The impact of ageing on your role as a carer

‘I need a regular rest, and this has become more important as I get older.’

Older carers must cope with their own age-related health issues along with the demands of care giving. The way a person copes depends on their personality, the availability of social support and their own physical and mental health. Carers need to allow themselves ‘time out’ to focus on their own health and wellbeing, so that they can continue in their caring role.

Successful ageing

‘Avoid taking ageing too seriously.
Getting older is a natural process.’

Some people age more successfully and more healthily than others. Some of the characteristics of the ‘successful agers’ are—concentrating on what is important and meaningful, having a positive outlook and meeting new challenges. For healthy ageing, it is important to stay active, both mentally and physically. The best approach for optimising health has to do with our own behaviour regarding nutrition, exercise, stress management and lifestyle choices.

HANDY HINTS

- Sort out what matters to you
- Work out what you are able to do and what your limits are—reassess this over time
- Recognise that your ability to care may reduce and seek help
- Focus on the positives of ageing. Try to mix with positive people—the chirpy ones
- Draw on your own experience, wisdom and resources
- Talk to your family and friends about changing needs
- Don't demand too much of yourself
- 50 is the old age of youth, 60 is the youth of old age
- Apply for a Seniors Card if you are 60 or over
- If you are 75 or over ask your general practitioner about having an 'Annual Health Assessment' which looks at physical and mental health
- Admit that you may now need some help and don't be too proud to accept it
- Be flexible and keep living simply
- Keep as active as possible
- Take time to care for your own health
- Continue with healthy living habits as you age
- Use respite services

YOUR NOTES

Where to find help

Careline/Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre
1800 059 059

Commonwealth Carelink Centre 1800 052 222

Council of the Ageing 1800 136 381

Seniors Card Hotline 03 9616 8241

Seniors Information Victoria 1300 135 090

Your GP

Websites

www.carersouth.org.au

www.commcarelink.health.gov.au

www.cotavic.org.au

www.seniors.vic.gov.au



Why should I exercise?

‘The most important thing for us carers is to keep fit and well.’

Regular physical activity is very important at any age. Keeping fit assists people to carry out their daily activities by improving their strength, balance and endurance. Exercise can reduce the risks of future ill health and can improve heart and lung functioning. Surprisingly, moderate exercise actually reduces fatigue.

Social and emotional benefits

‘I often walk to the shops, then catch the bus home if I’m tired.’

Exercise also has social and emotional benefits. Group activities promote social interaction and exercise has been shown to have beneficial effects on the stress levels and sleep quality of carers. Exercise is also very helpful if you feel depressed. Physical fitness is crucial to maintaining independence.

How much and what type of exercise?

‘Walk with a friend or neighbour, even if it is just around the block.’

People of all ages can improve their health and wellbeing by starting some moderate exercise. The Heart Foundation recommends that people include 30 minutes or more doing moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking, on most days. This exercise can be in 10-minute blocks throughout the day. Muscle-strengthening exercise, or strength training, is important for maintaining muscle and bone mass and increasing the metabolic rate. This means doing weight-bearing exercises, using light weights or dumbbells. Start slowly with any new exercise routine and get professional advice if unsure of how to begin.

Falls prevention

‘Exercise should be guided by safety. When you’re tired, have a rest.’

One in three people over 65 fall each year, which can result in injury and reduced independence. Falls usually occur because of loss of balance, fatigue, poor eyesight or tripping over obstacles around the house. Doing regular exercise and becoming physically stronger can help you to prevent falls. Contact Safe and Independent Living, Foothold on Safety for specific falls prevention information.



HANDY HINTS

- Get into a routine of exercising, daily if you can
- Take up a gentle exercise like Tai Chi or Yoga, swimming, walking or using an exercise bike indoors
- Contact your local Community Centre about exercise classes
- Do some gardening
- Play a sport that you enjoy and can do easily—golf, bowls, tennis
- Have a medical check up before starting a new exercise program and ask your doctor to recommend suitable exercise for you
- Stop exercising and seek medical advice if you have pain in your chest or feel dizzy
- Get some initial instruction for new activities, like strength training and use of weights, from a qualified fitness instructor at a gym or health centre
- Join University of the Third Age exercise classes for people over 50 and take as many courses as you like for an annual subscription of \$50
- Be aware of safety when exercising, use correct footwear and be falls conscious

Where to find help

Active for Life Infoline 1800 638 594
Community Centres in the Yellow Pages
University of The Third Age
Your GP

Websites

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~u3avic>
www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au
www.seniors.gov.au
www.vicfit.com.au

YOUR NOTES

Good nutrition is not just 'tea and toast'

Good nutrition is essential for health at any age and increases energy levels, which is very important for carers. Good nutrition is eating a variety of fresh and healthy foods. At any age people need high levels of vitamins, minerals, protein and carbohydrates. Eating three meals a day will provide the variety and quantity of food needed.

Food groups and quantities

'Eat for health—plenty of salads, fresh fruit and vegetables.'

A well balanced diet includes food from each of the food groups every day. A recommended daily diet:

- One to two serves of protein—meat, fish, poultry, eggs, nuts and legumes.
- Three serves of dairy—milk, yoghurt and cheese.
- Five serves of a variety of carbohydrates—bread, cereals, rice, pasta and noodles.
- Seven serves of fruit and vegetables—two fruit and five vegies.
- Fluids—6 to 8 serves of water, cordial, fruit juice or milk.
- It is good to reduce fat, sugar and salt, and to limit your alcohol intake.

Changing your diet

'Eat properly as there is only one of you and you can't be replaced.'

Changing cooking styles and eating habits can be very difficult, especially when you are a busy carer. Sometimes it helps to get some new ideas. Dietary guides are available from your GP, or a dietitian. You might like to consult a dietitian at the local *Community Health Centre*, especially if you have particular dietary needs because of an illness such as diabetes.

Budget cooking

'Plan meals with budget, time and ease of preparation in mind.'

As a carer, saving money and time is usually a very important consideration. Buying fresh ingredients and cooking them yourself is cheaper than buying prepared foods and 'take aways'. If you feel too tired to cook all the time then consider having *Meals on Wheels* delivered by your local council or a private home care agency.

HANDY HINTS

- Eat for health, prepare home made soups and casseroles
- Don't buy unhealthy food
- Buy food with the red tick from the Heart Foundation
- Use the healthy eating tips often available at doctors' consulting rooms or in supermarkets
- Invest in a good, practical recipe book
- Ask family and friends for their easy, healthy recipes and keep them in a file
- Be well organised, shop one day and cook the next
- Cook double and freeze half, label and date the frozen food and throw out the old food
- If time is tight shop at the supermarket rather than individual shops
- Use some good quality prepared sauces and add your own fresh ingredients
- Opt for healthy take aways like BBQ chicken without the skin and no chips!
- Go out for a meal once a week, if you can afford it
- It's OK to have an occasional special treat, enjoy!



Where to find help



Diabetes Australia 1800 640 862
Dietitians in Yellow Pages
Heartline 1300 362 787
Local Community Health Centre
Meals on Wheels, see Local
Government in Yellow Pages

Websites

www.daa.asn.au
www.dav.org.au
www.health.gov.au
www.heartfoundation.com.au
www.yellowpages.com.au

YOUR NOTES

Sleep is as important to the body as food and water. Insufficient sleep or disruptions to your sleep pattern can cause fatigue. A fatigued person is accident prone, judgment impaired and more likely to make mistakes and bad decisions.

Being awake for 24 hours leads to reduced coordination similar to having a blood alcohol content of 0.1. Sleep deprivation can lead to road accidents, work injuries and an increased risk of depression.

The value of a good night's sleep cannot be over estimated. Good quality sleep is necessary for your body and mind to perform at their best each day. Sleep helps to restore and rejuvenate your memory processes, energise your nervous and immune systems and stimulate overall growth and development.

How much sleep do I need?

People differ in how much sleep they need depending on age, physical activity level, general health and other individual factors.

Adults need about 8 hours sleep each night. We tend to need less sleep as we age. Let yourself be guided by your own state of alertness.

'I can perform my caring role much better when I'm well rested.'

Having trouble sleeping?

Many carers have difficulty getting a good night's sleep because the person they care for is awake or needs attention through the night. It can be due to the carer being unable to 'shut-down' their mind in order to go to sleep. The relative peace and quiet of night is often a time when thoughts, worries and stresses come crowding into our minds—and this can make getting to sleep very difficult.

There are ways to improve your sleep

- It normally takes 15-20 minutes to fall asleep. If you are still awake half an hour after going to bed, don't lie awake worrying about not sleeping. Get up and do something until you feel tired again, then return to bed.
- Check with your doctor to make sure that any medical conditions that may interfere with sleep are treated.
- Develop a bedtime ritual such as unwinding during the evening by relaxing, reading or listening to music. Have a warm milky drink before going to bed. A warm shower or bath can also help you to relax.
- Associate bed with sleep. Don't eat or watch television in bed.
- Get into a routine—get up at a regular time each morning— including weekends. Ensure plenty of morning sunlight can come into your home to get your body clock working.
- Avoid large meals, alcohol and stimulants such as tea, coffee, cola, cigarettes, before bedtime and try to exercise in the afternoon or early evening, but not within three hours of bedtime.

HANDY HINTS

- Reduce light and noise in your bedroom
- Make sure your bed, bedding and pillows are comfortable
- Don't take daytime naps—as these can stop you falling asleep at night
- Make sure you are not too hot or cold
- Regular exercise helps us to sleep
- Try yoga or mediation to help empty your mind and relax
- Try massage
- Find some relaxing music to play quietly
- Don't have a fixed bedtime, because it causes anxiety if you don't fall asleep. Go to bed when you are tired.
- If you can't sleep – don't lie there and worry about it
- Use respite to get a really good night's sleep on a regular basis



Where to find help

Careline/Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre 1800 059 059

Local Community House or Gym for Yoga, Meditation and Exercise Classes

Quitline 137848

Your GP

Websites

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

www.carersouth.org.au

www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au

www.quit.org.au

YOUR NOTES

Hearing

As you grow older the chances of developing a hearing loss become greater. The cause may simply be an accumulation of ‘wear and tear’ over a lifetime. Fifty per cent of people over 60 can expect to have a significant loss of hearing.

‘Don’t assume that if something is going wrong it’s just a sign of ageing—get it checked out by a professional.’

What can I do?

Some people may be able to have their hearing improved with medical treatment. The first step is to consult your general practitioner who will check to see if you require medical attention. You may be referred to a specialist in hearing, called an audiologist, for a hearing assessment. If there is a hearing loss, the audiologist will discuss what can be done to help. Each person will have different communication needs and lifestyle preferences for which an individual hearing improvement program will be developed. The fitting of a hearing aid can be part of this program.

‘Never put anything in your ear smaller than your elbow!’

Good eye care can save your sight

Good eye care can assist driving, walking, reading and playing sport. Eyesight problems do increase with age and can limit your independence and enjoyment of life. However, losing your sight does not need to be something you ‘put up with’ as you get older. Most eyesight problems have no obvious symptoms in the early stages and can only be detected by a thorough eye examination.

What can I do?

‘Remember to have the person you care for checked out too.’

Have your eyes tested by your general practitioner or your local optometrist. They will make an initial diagnosis and will refer you to other eye care or health specialists if necessary. Remember, reading glasses are for reading. Many falls occur when people use the wrong glasses.

‘I like to get my eyesight checked by my optometrist every couple of years.’

HANDY HINTS

- Get your hearing and eyesight tested regularly by your general practitioner
- Australian Hearing can help you choose a hearing aid or a listening device
- The Office of Hearing Services may be able to help you receive subsidised hearing services
- To clean your ears, regularly wipe around the outside of the ear with a damp cloth. Don't poke around in your ear
- People over 60 should have their eyes checked at least every two years
- People with diabetes or a family history of glaucoma, people who have spent a lot of time in the sun, and those from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background need earlier and more frequent visits
- Eye examinations are covered by Medicare and most optometrists bulk bill
- The Victorian Eyecare Service provides eye care at low cost for pensioners and others of limited means who live in country Victoria



Where to find help

- Australian Hearing 13 17 97
- Better Hearing Australia 9510 1577
- Office of Hearing 1800 500 726
- Office of Hearing Services 1800 500 496 TTY
- Optometrists Association 9486 1700
- Optometrists in the Yellow Pages
- Victorian Eyecare Service 9349 7434
- Vision Australia Foundation 1300 84 74 66
- Vision Information Line 1800 331 000
- Your GP

YOUR NOTES

Websites

- www.health.gov.au/hear
- www.hearing.com.au
- www.vicoptom.asn.au
- www.visionaustralia.org.au/visioninfo
- www.yellowpages.com.au

Emotional wellbeing

Being a carer can be emotionally draining. Some surveys have shown that, at times, carers do not have enough emotional support. Feelings and emotional wellbeing are difficult for many people to understand, let alone talk about easily.

Feelings

‘Do not feel guilty. You can only do your best. If you are not feeling good about yourself, how can you help others?’

You may experience a broad range of feelings, from positive to negative, about your role as a carer. These include feelings of pride and a sense of achievement for the wonderful job you are doing. Feelings like guilt and anger are very normal responses to the grief and loss many carers experience. If these feelings become overwhelming and are not acknowledged then you may be putting your emotional wellbeing at risk. Always seek professional help before things get out of hand.

Acknowledge the difficulties, and believe in yourself.

‘We need to make wise and balanced decisions about our lives.’

As a carer, you may look at other people around you, and feel that their lives are easier. Thinking in this way can make you feel down and overwhelmed. Remind yourself of the positive experiences you have had in your caring role and other parts of your life. Acknowledge that you have been dealt a difficult and demanding role, and affirm your belief that you are strong enough to manage it.

What can I do?

‘Knowing that *Careline* is there 24 hours a day, is like having a friend to listen’

It is very important to be self-aware and to know your limits. Learn to recognise signals in yourself that indicate you are too stressed or becoming anxious and depressed. Being able to speak openly to a trusted person about your feelings and your emotional wellbeing can be very helpful. This person might be a family member, a friend or your doctor— whoever you feel really comfortable with. Make note of an emergency contact service like *Lifeline* or *Careline* that is available 24 hours a day to help you.

HANDY HINTS

- Make time for yourself as an individual, not only as a carer
- Do something that you enjoy and are respected for as an individual
- Switch off from your caring role when you can
- Have an interest or hobby—it doesn't matter what it is, just do it!
- Read the newspaper or watch TV to keep up-to-date with current affairs
- Join your local library
- Take time to maintain relationships with your family and friends
- Laugh a lot
- Learn to accept outside help if and when you need it
- Take each day as it comes
- Talk to a trusted friend or family member
- Seek professional help from your doctor or a counsellor if you are concerned that you are not coping
- Call the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre to discuss respite options to make the time to look after yourself
- Call Carers Victoria for free telephone counselling or to arrange a low-cost counselling session with a local counsellor

Where to find help

Careline—Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre 1800 059 059

Carers Victoria 1800 242 636

Libraries in the Yellow Pages

Lifeline 131 114

Mental Health Foundation 1300 785 005

Mental Health Publications 1800 066 247

SANE 1800 688 382

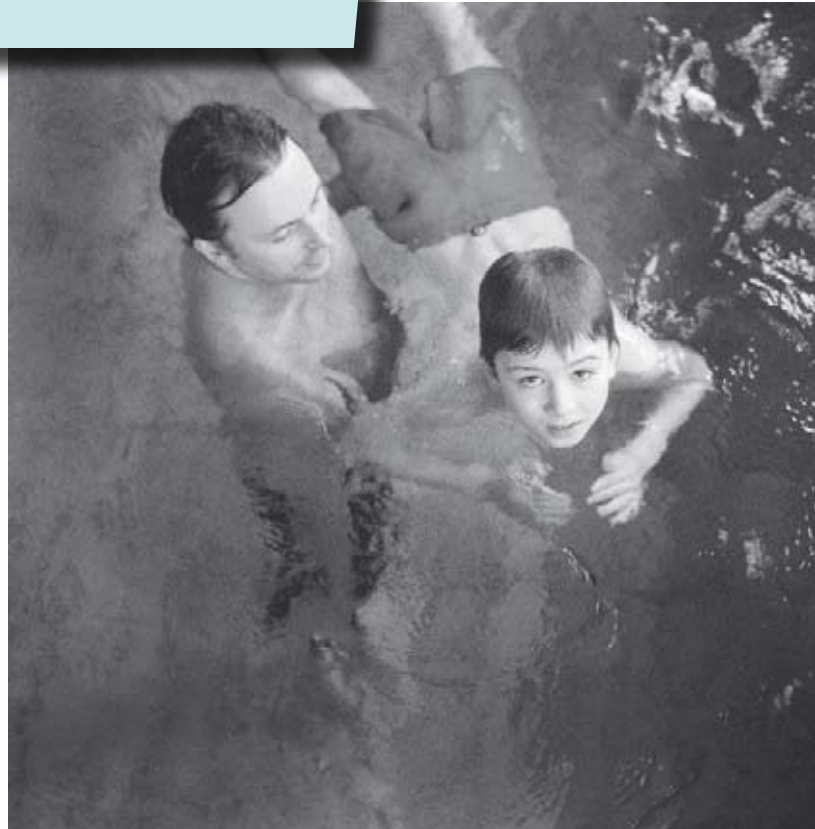
VicHealth 9667 1333

Websites

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

www.beyondblue.org.au

www.mhfa.org.au



YOUR NOTES

What is stress?

‘I know that sometimes I am so uptight that the ringing of the phone can make me jump.’

Stress is a normal part of everyday life. Stress has been described as ‘the physical response of the body to any demand placed upon it’. Our nervous system reacts in the same way whether we are reacting to fear or excitement—your pulse quickens, your heart beats faster, you take shorter breaths and feel on edge. Too much stress reaction, or ‘distress’, is not good for physical and emotional wellbeing.

How do you recognise that you are too stressed?

‘For me, it’s emotional overload. I get exhausted and become disoriented and start saying “I don’t care anymore”.’

Being a carer may be extremely stressful at times. Continuous extreme stress and tension can cause physical symptoms, like headaches or stomach pain, and can interfere with sleeping and eating patterns causing tiredness and irritability. Sometimes it’s difficult to recognise stress overload in ourselves but usually other people can tell. Ask someone you trust, such as a friend, family member or your doctor to be your stress ‘watch dog’ and to gently let you know.

How can I manage stress?

‘Look behind the outburst and deal with the trigger that caused it. Try to keep your sense of humour.’

It is very important to control your stress and not let it control you. Take note of how you feel when you are relaxed and compare that to how you feel when are not coping well. List the events that caused these different reactions. Keeping a ‘feelings and events’ diary might assist you to recognise what is a good stress level for you. The usual health tips of exercise and relaxation methods are good for de-stressing too. Work out what helps you to relax and assists you to optimise your energy levels.

‘I brush things off and don’t let them worry me too much. I put on some nice music and try to relax.’

HANDY HINTS

- Try not to do everything in the one day as this only increases stress
- Don't raise the bar too high for yourself—you are doing the best you can!
- If it helps, speak with people in similar situations who can understand and relate to your problems
- Assess the whole situation and make changes where possible
- Focus on positives and actively develop a positive thinking approach
- Make the most of any rest period, and have little breaks away from the person you care for.
- Learn how to relax in your own way—put on your favourite CD, bake a cake, have a massage, have your morning cuppa outside
- Listen to the Carer Relaxation CD available from Carers Victoria
- If you feel unable to manage your stress levels yourself, talk to your general practitioner or seek counselling from Carers Victoria, a psychologist, social worker or your clergy
- It may not be safe to drive when you are very stressed
- Try some of the ideas for gentle exercise in 'Exercise'
- Try learning yoga or meditation
- Hug someone—if touch is important to you. A teddy bear will do!
- Get a low maintenance pet like a gold fish or put a bird bath and feeder outside and enjoy bird watching

YOUR NOTES

Where to find help

Careline/Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre
1800 059 059

Carers Victoria 1800 242 636

Psychologists/Social Workers/Community
Health Centres in the Yellow Pages

Your GP

Websites

www.carersvic.org.au

www.carersouth.org.au

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

www.yellowpages.com.au



11 Personality and coping >

Everyone is different

‘It depends on the individual that you care for and your own needs. There is not one solution for all.’

We are all individuals and have different personalities, shaped by our family backgrounds and our own life experiences. How we behave and the way we cope develops throughout our lives. Some people cope well and become stronger through the hardships they have had to face. This personal strength is called resilience and it can be learnt by many. Carers are generally very resilient people, because they have to be.

Coping well

‘Wipe away the tears, wash the face, have a cuppa, then get yourself going again. Be happy about the things that you can do.’

Everyone copes differently at different times. There is never only one way to do things. Becoming well informed about available community support services and developing your own support network will enhance your sense of coping and personal strength. Your own support network might include your family and friends plus your general practitioner, allied health professionals, church, carer agencies or support groups. Recognise your limitations and seek help. You may not be able to do it all on your own.

Dealing with other people

‘A lot of people feel uncomfortable not knowing how to deal with your situation. You need to make an effort if you want them to understand.’

Be clear to others about how they can help you and what your preferences are for their involvement in your caring role. Sometimes it helps to look at other people’s lives and view things from their perspective. Most people have problems and being open to listen to their stories can sometimes help you see your own situation in another light.

HANDY HINTS

- Look after your own needs and say 'no' at times
- Keep a sense of balance about your situation—what can and cannot be done
- Congratulate yourself on a job well done and reward yourself regularly
- Develop your own support network
- Write a list of helpful people's phone numbers
- Some people may say 'You are doing too much'. Ask other trusted people what they would do.
- Seek professional help earlier rather than later
- Consider personal counselling if you feel overwhelmed or wish to learn other ways of coping better

YOUR NOTES

Where to find help

Careline/Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre
1800 059 059

Carers Victoria 1800 242 636

Psychologists/Social Workers see Community
Health Centres in Resources

Relationships Australia 1300 364 277

Your GP

Websites

www.carersouth.org.au

www.carersvic.org.au

www.relationships.com.au

www.yellowpages.com.au



12 Social contact and activities >

Social contact

‘Loneliness and isolation are your worst enemies. Get out and about and surround yourself with happy people.’

It is very important for many carers to have some social contact to avoid the risk of becoming too isolated. Social contact provides carers with friendship and opportunities to mix with people outside the caring role and do activities other than caring. Make the most of any opportunity to get out and mingle. For example, even shopping can be quite social if you regard every contact with people as a social event.

Support groups

‘The carers’ support group meetings are a great help. Talking and listening to other carers makes my role easier to handle.’

Support groups offer a ‘safe’ environment where members can talk about their experiences and express their feelings, both positive and negative. Support groups have rules of confidentiality, so that everything said in the group stays in the group. For some carers, a support group is a very helpful way of learning more about the illness or disability that they are involved with. The *Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre* can put you in touch with the support groups in your region. Formal support groups are not for everyone and that’s OK too.

When you can’t get out

‘Take up a hobby at home. I started a craft, which I’m still doing today and I’ve even won prizes at the Show.’

If you are housebound because of your caring role or your own ill-health, develop ways of keeping active at home and staying in touch with other people. The telephone can be a vital link to keep in contact with friends, family and community support services. There are even telephone support groups available. A number of support services have ‘Telelink’ phone support services for people who wish to be part of group, but cannot meet in person, for reasons such as a caring role, a disability, or distance. You could also try email and chat groups. *Carers Victoria* have a number of ‘online’ carer groups. See ‘Using the internet’ on page 40.

HANDY HINTS

- If you like group activities, join a support group or social club. Community Centres and Neighbourhood Houses have lots of activities and groups. Look them up in your local newspaper, the Yellow Pages or call Commonwealth Carelink Centre
- Become a volunteer for a local organisation if you like this kind of involvement
- Community Friends of Red Cross offers emotional support to carers
- Keep in contact with your friends
- Visit a nursery or a museum where there are always other people about
- Take the person you care for with you when you can or arrange respite so you can go out alone
- If you can't get out then enjoy activities at home like gardening, crafts, knitting, woodwork, reading, watching TV, jigsaw puzzles and crosswords
- Do what you enjoy, that doesn't cost too much. Do nothing! It's all right sometimes
- Find a haven at home where you have your own space
- Get a cat or dog if you can manage it

YOUR NOTES



Where to find help

Carers Victoria 1800 242 636

Commonwealth Carelink Centre 1800 052 222

Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre 1800 059 059

Community Centres, Senior Citizens Centres in the Yellow Pages

Community Friends of Red Cross 5229 1564

Volunteering Victoria 9650 5541

Websites

www.carersouth.org.au

www.carersvic.org.au

www.govolunteer.com.au

www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au

www.yellowpages.com.au

Emergency plans

Many carers worry about what will happen to the person they care for if they suddenly get sick themselves or if there is a crisis. As mentioned in the section on 'Planning for the Future' emergencies do happen, so it makes sense to 'be prepared'. *Carers Victoria* has an excellent 'Emergency Care Plan' for carers. Call them for a copy. Having emergency plans in place will give you some peace of mind.

In a crisis

'In an emergency, the *Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre* organised help to care for my daughter very quickly.'

Call the Careline at the *Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre* 24-hour emergency number if you suddenly become ill or are injured and need to go to hospital. If the worst happens, and there is no one who can come immediately to look after the person you care for, take them with you in the ambulance. Staff at the hospital emergency department will be able to organise emergency respite care.

Feeling safe

'I wear my personal alarm all the time. It gives me a great sense of security.'

If you or the person you care for are frail, elderly, have a disability or live alone, a personal alarm system may be worth considering. These systems consist of an electronic pendant, worn at all times, that is linked through the telephone to a 24-hour security monitoring service. Contact the *Department of Human Services* for a copy of their 'Personal Alert' booklet and *Safety Link* for local service information.

Safety at home

Carers, and the person they care for, need to be safety conscious around the house. Consider having a free home safety assessment done by *Archicentre Home Services*. Local Government has Home Maintenance Services for minor repairs to ensure safety. Eligible clients are people over 65 and those in receipt of a disability payment. The *Department of Human Services* may also be able to advise on funding home modifications. The *Aged Care Assessment Service* does assessments for home modifications, for older people. *Veterans' Affairs* have services including Home Maintenance Helpline, Home Front falls prevention advice and Back-to-Basics for back care.

HANDY HINTS

- Complete an 'Emergency Care Plan' or write up your own emergency contacts
- Include details of the needs of both the carer and the person being cared for in this emergency plan
- Place this information in a clearly marked envelope near the telephone
- Give your family, or significant others, copies of your plan and the Carer Respite Centre phone number
- Carry your emergency plan and contacts with you
- Carry a bag with you containing your mobile phone, medication, health information and warnings such as allergies you may have
- Wear a 'Medi-alert' bracelet if you have a known medical condition. These are available from chemists.
- Contact Neighbourhood Watch for an added sense of security at home
- Get a cordless phone and carry it with you so you don't have to rush to answer it
- Contact the Home Renovation service about home safety plans and finance assistance

Where to find help



YOUR NOTES

- Ambulance, Fire or Police 000
- Archicentre Home Services 9815 1900
- Careline/Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre 1800 059 059
- Carers Victoria 1800 242 636
- Department of Human Services 9616 7777
- Home Renovation Service 1300 136 513
- Hospital/Local Government/Neighbourhood Watch—in Yellow Pages
- Safety Link 1800 813 617
- Safe Return Home 1800 112 201
- Veterans' Affairs 1800 555 254
- Vital Call 1300 360 808

Websites

- www.carersouth.org.au
- www.carersvic.org.au
- www.dhs.vic.gov.au
- www.dva.gov.au
- www.health.vic.gov.au
- www.safereturnhome.com.au
- www.safetylink.net.au
- www.vitalcall.com.au
- www.yellowpages.com.au

What is respite?

‘Don’t think you can cope alone. The strain can undermine your own health.’

Respite is a rest, break or time out from your caring role. Caring is recognised as being tiring and stressful for many carers. Respite is an important part of looking after yourself so that you can keep looking after the person you care for. Respite is available—short term, long term, in-home, day programs, holiday, emergency and residential. Ideally the respite will be flexible enough to meet your needs and be beneficial for the person you care for.

‘I really benefit from having a break from my caring role. Whether it’s overnight or for a weekend.’

How do I organise respite?

The *Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre* can explain what your options are and the costs involved. Usually an individual assessment of your circumstances is required. The Centre will be able to suggest respite and recreation services that can give you a break – e.g. on a frequent basis for a couple of hours, during school holidays, or overnight.

Recreation as respite

‘John and his mates go to the football; they have a marvellous time, especially when the Cats win.’

Respite can benefit the person you care for. Many respite options for people with disabilities are also recreational activities for the person. This gives them the opportunity to meet new friends, enjoy themselves, learn new skills and develop their abilities and independence.

HANDY HINTS

- Make sure you get time off regularly from your caring role
- Plan long- and short-term regular respite well ahead of time and use it
- Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre has a 24-hour emergency respite phone service
- For disability respite and accommodation contact Department of Human Services Intake and Response

Where to find help

Carers Victoria 1800 242 636

Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre 1800 059 059

Department of Human Services Disability Intake and Response 1800 783 783

Your general practitioner

Websites

www.carersouth.org.au

www.carersvic.org.au

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability

www.respitesouth.org.au



YOUR NOTES

Help for carers

‘Seek help before you run out of steam.’

Accessing useful information and support can be difficult, and the stress of caring and the usual health issues associated with a busy life and getting older can make this harder. Make use of available help.

‘There is so much information I don’t know where to start.’

Start with this *Wellness Guide* for information relevant to your situation and then contact the support services you need. Most support services staff are very well informed and can point you in the right direction. The key carer support services that can assist with referral to other agencies are the *Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre* and *Commonwealth Carelink Centre*. Other great resources are the Community Help and Government Section pages at the front of the *Yellow Pages*.

Additional support services

‘Professionals are often more objective than family, so seek them out.’

The *Department of Human Services* produces a *Help for Carers—Information for Older Carers of People with a Disability*—book. The *Ethnic Communities Council* provides information about services for people from ‘Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities’ (people from ‘non- English speaking backgrounds’). Telephone interpreting services are available from *Translating and Interpreting Service*. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can contact the Indigenous Access Worker or Inclusion Support Facilitator at their local *Community Health Centre* or *Council* for information about their services.

Financial assistance

Information about pensions, carer allowance, carer payment, mobility allowance and concession cards is available from *Centrelink*. The carer allowance is the only service not means-tested. *Centrelink* also provide a free financial information service. Contact *DHS* for eligibility for early choices, making a difference or linkages packages, and the *Aged Care Assessment Service* to check eligibility for a community aged care or extended care at home package that provides some funding for in-home services.

Transport and equipment

Disabled car parking permits are available through your local government office. Half-price taxi information is available through the *Taxi Directorate*. Contact *Disability Information Victoria* about subsidised aids, equipment and home modifications.

HANDY HINTS

- Don't be too scared to ask for all the help you need
- Keep in touch with one agency that you can develop a relationship of trust with
- Write down the name and phone number of the person you are speaking to for future reference
- Try to be assertive with health professionals and be clear about your situation and needs
- Getting the help you need can take time and be frustrating, but keep going and keep asking questions
- Take someone with you to appointments if you need extra moral support
- Talk to other people in a similar situation about where they have found help
- If you need to transport a person in a wheelchair, book a maxi taxi early to ensure availability.
- Many services offer free interpreting. Let them know which language you speak.
- Contact the Commonwealth Carelink Centre for telephone numbers of local Department of Human Services Intake or Aged Care Assessment Services.

Where to find help



- Careline/Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre
1800 059 059
- Carers Victoria 1800 242 636
- Centrelink 132717
- Centrelink in languages other than English 131 202
- Commonwealth Carelink Centres 1800 052 222
- Disability Information Victoria 1300 650 865
- Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria 9349 4122
- Financial Information Service 132 300
- Local government in Yellow Pages
- Seniors Information Victoria 1300 135 450
- Taxi Directorate 1800 638 802
- Taxis in the Yellow Pages
- TIS—Translating and Interpreting Services 131 450
- Veterans Affairs 1800 555254

YOUR NOTES

Websites

- www.carersouth.org.au
- www.carersvic.org.au
- www.centrelink.gov.au
- www.commcarelink.health.gov.au
- www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability
- www.dva.gov.au
- www.eccv.org.au
- www.respitesouth.com.au
- www.yellowpages.com.au

16 Planning your circle of support >

As carers, we often rely on formal services and immediate family only to provide the help and support we need in our caring role. However, if you look around at the people you see everyday, or even every week, you might be surprised at the help and support that could be available to you if you just ask.

Circle of support

A circle of support is a way to describe those around you, as a carer, who might be able to offer help and support.

Think about your friends and wider family. Have any of them said 'let me know if I can help'. Sometimes the hardest step is saying 'actually—yes, I could use some help'. Make a list of simple things that would help you to manage your carer role and your other roles better. Would it help if a friend:

- Cooked some meals to put in the freezer
- Picked your children up from school now and then
- Drove the person you care for to a recreational activity to save you time
- Made a point of asking you how you are coping every now and then.

Sometimes people close to you want to help, but are reluctant to ask, or may ask in a way that makes you feel like you cannot ask much of them. Try asking for the help you need. Start with something small.

Other types of community support

You may also find offers of help coming from others areas in you local community such as:

- your child's school
- your neighbours
- local clubs e.g. recreation and sporting clubs
- churches
- local traders and shops

HANDY HINTS

- If someone says 'let me know if I can help' take them up on it
- Don't feel you have to cope alone. Your friend's will often want to help, but might not know how
- A case manager, social worker or carer support worker may help you to write a plan for setting up your circle of support

Where to find help

Brotherhood Community Nexus
9782 1184

Careline/Commonwealth Carer
Respite Centre 1800 059 059

School welfare worker

Your case manager or social worker

Website

www.bsl.org.au

www.carersouth.org.au

YOUR NOTES



17 Planning for the future >

Each stage of life both you and the person you care for involve changes that need to be planned for in advance. This preparation will increase the independence of the person with the disability and ensure that services and supports needed at each life stage are available.

Planning for now

It is important for carers to have a current plan for support and respite. The difficult times can be better managed when you know you have an approaching respite break, or you have planned where to get help.

‘When Jeannie was born with a disability we were too busy coping each day to think of the future. Forty five years later her future is my greatest worry.’

Often the services and supports we want or need may not be available at short notice—so it is important to plan ahead. Your plan may include:

- Services to provide a regular break for a few hours or overnight—such as local council HACCC or a recreation program
- Recreation activities or camps for school holiday periods—such as People Outdoors or local council school holiday programs
- Contacts for support for one-off events such as a wedding or party, or when you are unwell or when someone else needs you—such as *Careline*
- Support for an emergency or urgent need—e.g. when you are unable to be at home to care, due to your own or another family members ill health.

Planning for later

Carers may feel confronted by issues of their changing life stages including their own declining health and mobility, changes to their friendship networks, changes in support available from others and the need to more carefully manage their finances.

As carers age, they may become concerned about how the person they care for will be supported when they can no longer provide the care. There is no one organisation that will automatically take over your caring role, but there are ways to get help with planning for the future. A plan may cover:

- Accommodation for the person with the disability including independent living, aids and equipment they may require
- Day programs and recreation
- Financial and legal considerations e.g. Power of Attorney
- Health and respite care.

Planning for the future needs of a family member with a disability is not easy. Start your planning early and discuss options with the person with the disability and your family members. Together you can identify the information you need to prepare for future changes.

HANDY HINTS

- Always have a plan for how you will manage now—know who to call and how to get support when you need it. Planning for emergencies is really important.
- Write down your plans—both for now and the future—make sure others know where they are written
- Talk about the future to the person you care for, family, friends and service providers
- Talk to the person with the disability about their dreams and wishes for their future
- Carer support groups are a great place to find others who have been through the planning process and can give you some tips
- Ask service providers for help and support



Where to find help

Careline/Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre 1800 059 059

Centrelink 132 717

Disability Information Victoria 1300 650 865

Department of Human Services—Southern Metropolitan Region 9213 2111

Guardianship List 1800 133 055

Office of the Public Advocate 1800 136 829

People Outdoors 9350 5116

Program of Aids for Disabled People (PADP)

Distribution Centres

Caulfield Medical Centre 9276 6316

Kingston Centre 9265 1218

Dandenong Hospital 9554 8238

State Trustees Limited 1800 133 095

Victorian Advocacy League for Individuals with a Disability (VALID) 1800 655570

Victorian Council of Residential Associations for Persons with intellectual disability (VICRAID) 9362 0900

Villamanta Legal Services 1800 014 111

Yooralla Breakaway 8574 4700

Websites

www.carersouth.org.au

www.disabilityinfo.org.au

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability

www.opa.org.au

www.peopleoutdoors.org.au

www.respitesouth.org.au

www.yooralla.com.au

YOUR NOTES

What is the Internet?

‘My kids and grandkids tell me to use it.’

The Internet is a world wide collection of interconnected computers and networks. A network is a collection of individual computers linked to each other. To use the Internet you need a personal computer and to subscribe to an internet provider to connect you via a phone line. The Internet provides access to a vast range of information resources organised onto ‘web pages’ for viewing on your computer by connecting or ‘logging on’ to the address or ‘website’.

What is email?

‘Email is a great way of keeping in touch from home.’

Email means electronic mail which is a way of sending a message to someone else on the Internet.

How do I start?

There are courses available to teach you how to use the internet to access information. Local community centres, *TAFES* and *University of the Third Age (U3A)* all offer internet training. U3A provides adult education for people over 50 years of age. *Seniors Access to Information (SATIN)* offers free internet training to people over 50 to encourage them to use the internet and email at public access sites such as regional libraries.

‘It’s the way of the future.’

The internet is a way of keeping up-to-date with current information about health and wellbeing and carer issues. *The Wellness Guide* is available on the internet. Services that offer respite for carers of people with disabilities are listed on the *Respite South* website. Most support services have websites which are listed throughout *The Wellness Guide*. You can also keep in touch or ‘chat’ with people around the world through the internet. *Carers Victoria* has ‘online’ carer groups who meet to chat on the internet.

Be careful

There is a large amount of information available on the internet from reputable sources. But there are also some websites that are not reputable or accurate so be discerning about your internet use and check the accuracy of the information.

‘Don’t take information off the internet as gospel! Check its accuracy’.

HANDY HINTS

- Go to your local library to use computers and to log onto the internet for free
- Ask your children, grandchildren or any computer literate person to show you how to use the internet
- Enrol in a free internet class through Seniors Access to Information (SATIN) and be trained one-on-one, at your own pace by another trained senior
- Better Health Channel has online health information
- Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre has a website containing information for carers
- Register for the Carers Victoria Newsletter 'e-bulletin' online
- The Southern Metropolitan Disability Respite Network has a service seeker website that lists local respite services and links to InfoxChange
- Look up this Wellness Guide on the CCRCsMR website
- The Health Translations Directory provides online access to health information in languages other than English
- Be selective about the information you receive from the internet and check its accuracy before following any advice



YOUR NOTES

Where to find help



Carers Victoria 1800 242 636
Community Centres in the Yellow Pages
Libraries in the Yellow Pages
SATIN 1800 136 381

Websites

<http://home.vic.net.au/~u3avic>
www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
www.carersouth.org.au
www.carersvic.org.au
www.cotavic.org.au
www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability
www.greenpc.com.au (low price recycled computers for low income earners)
www.infoxchange.net.au
www.mc2.vicnet.net.au
www.respitesouth.org.au
www.togetherwedobetter.vic.gov.au

Resources >

Each agency referred to in the ‘Where to find help’ section is listed again here in alphabetical order along with some extra agencies that may be helpful to you.

Tip for seeking information: If you don’t get the right answer, keep asking more questions and keep asking ‘Who else should I talk to about this?’ until you have found out what you need to know.

Agency	Description	Telephone	Web address
Active for Life Infoline	Information on Activities	1300 885 602	www.vicfit.com.au
Alzheimer’s Australia	Information and Support for people with dementia	9815 7800	www.alzheimers.org.au
	National Dementia Helpline	1800 100 500	
Ambulance	Emergency Service	000	
Archicentre Home Services	Home assessment service	1300 13 45 13	www.archicentre.com.au
Australian Department of Health and Ageing	General Information on Health and Ageing	1800 020 103	www.health.gov.au
Australian Drug Foundation	Information on alcohol and drug problems prevention	03 9278 8100	www.adf.org.au
Australian Hearing	Information on Hearing Services	131 797	www.hearing.com.au
Autism Victoria	Information on Autism services	9885 0533	www.autismvictoria.org.au
Better Health Channel	Health Information Website		www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Better Hearing Australia	Services for people with hearing loss	9510 1577	www.betterhearing.org.au
Beyond Blue	Depression support infoline	1300 22 4636	www.beyondblue.org.au
Brainlink	Information on support for those with conditions of the brain and their carers	1800 677 579	www.brainlink.org.au
Cancer Helpline	Telephone counseling service for people affected by cancer	131 120	www.cancervic.org.au
Carers Victoria (Carer Advisory Service)	Information, education, counseling, support and advocacy for carers	1800 242 636	www.carersvic.org.au
Carer Support Groups Carers Victoria	Information on groups in local areas	1800 242 636	www.carersvic.org.au
Centrelink	Financial assistance, pensions and carer payments	132 717	www.centrelink.gov.au

Agency	Description	Telephone	Web address
Centrelink Information in languages other than English	Information on financial assistance, pensions and carer payments in languages other than English	131 202	www.centrelink.gov.au
Centrelink Seminar Bookings	Booking a financial information seminar	136 357	www.centrelink.gov.au
Commonwealth Carer Respite and Carelink Centres	Information on respite and carer support; general information about community support services	1800 059 059 1800 052 222	www.commcarelink.health.gov.au
Community Centres	Locally based community services	Yellow Pages	www.yellowpages.com.au
Community Friends of Red Cross	Volunteer visitors to carers for emotional support	1800 246 850	www.redcross.org.au/vic
Community Health Centres	Services can include Dental, Dieticians, District Nursing, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Podiatry, Psychology and Social Work.	Yellow Pages	
Companion Card	For people with a significant disability who need a companion	1800 650 611	www.companioncard.org.au
Continence Helpline	Continence information and Public Toilet map	1800 330 066	www.contfound.org.au www.toiletmap.gov.au
Deaf Society	Services for adults with hearing loss and deafness	9473 1111	www.vicdeaf.com.au
Department of Health and Ageing	See Australian Department of Health and Ageing		
Department of Human Services – Disability Branch Intake and Response	Victorian Government Department that oversees disability services	1800 783 783	www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Diabetes Australia	Information and support for people with diabetes	1300 136 588	www.dav.org.au
Dieticians in the Yellow Pages	Nutrition and healthy diet advisors	Yellow Pages	www.yellowpages.com.au
Direct Line – Alcohol and Drugs	24-hour counseling and information	1800 888 236	www.turningpoint.org.au
Disability Information Victoria—Disability Online	Information for people with a disability and their carers		www.disability.vic.gov.au

Agency	Description	Telephone	Web address
Do-Care	social support service for socially isolated, frail older people and adults with disabilities.	9770 0151	www.wesley.org.au
Down's Syndrome Association	Services for people with Down's Syndrome	9486 2377	www.dsav.asn.au
Epilepsy Foundation	Services for people with epilepsy	1300 852 853	www.epinet.org.au
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria	Directory of multicultural services	9349 4122	www.eccv.org.au
Family drug and alcohol help Helpline	Information and support for family affected by drugs and alcohol	1300 660 068	www.familydrughelp.shrc.org.au
Financial Information Service	Centrelink information about financial matters	132 300	www.centrelink.gov.au
Fire	Emergency Service	000	
Health Translations Directory	Health information in other languages website		www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au
Heartline	Information and support for people with heart disease	1300 362 787	www.heartfoundation.com.au
Headway	Advocacy and information for people with acquired brain injury	1800 817 964	www.headwayvictoria.org.au
Home Renovation Service	Information about home safety	1300 136 513	www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Hospitals	Acute and emergency care	White Pages Yellow pages	www.whitepages.com.au www.yellowpages.com.au
I ndependent Living Centre	Information on aids for daily living	1800 686 533	www.yooralla.com.au
InfoXchange Service Seeker	Directory of services		www.infoxchange.org.au
L egal Aid	Assistance with legal representation	1800 677 402	www.legalaid.vic.gov.au
Libraries in the Yellow Pages	Lending of books and audio resources	Yellow Pages	www.yellowpages.com.au
Lifeline	Crisis telephone counseling 24 hour service	131 114	www.lifeline.org.au
Local Government	Disability, Aged Care, Home and Community Care, Home Maintenance, Meals on Wheels	White pages	www.whitepages.com.au
M edicines Line	Information about medicines	1300 888 763	www.nps.org.au

Agency	Description	Telephone	Web address
Mental Health Foundation of Australia (Victoria)	Information and referral to mental health services	9427 0406	www.mentalhealth.asn.au
Mental Illness Fellowship of Victoria	Support services for people with mental illness	8486 4200	www.mifellowship.org
Multiple Sclerosis Society	Services for people with multiple sclerosis	1800 287 367	www.msaustralia.org.au
Muscular Dystrophy Association	Services for people with muscular dystrophy	1800 656 632	www.mda.org.au
N eighbourhood Watch	Police home safety program Contact local police station	White Pages	www.whitepages.com.au
O ffice of Hearing	Information about hearing aids	1800 500 726	www.hearing.com.au
Office of the Public Advocate	Information about powers of attorney and guardianship	1800 136 829	www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au
Optometrists Association	Victorian association of optometrists	9654 2122	www.vicoptom.asn.au
Optometrists in the Yellow Pages	Eye testing for vision problems and prescription of glasses	Yellow pages	www.yellowpages.com.au
P araQuad Victoria	Services for paraplegics and quadraplegics	9415 1200	www.paraquad.asn.au
Parkinson's Victoria	Services for people with Parkinson's disease	1800 644 189	www.parkinsons-vic.org.au
Police	Emergency service	000	
Q uitline	Assistance with quitting smoking	131 848	www.quit.org.au
R econnexion	Tranquilliser dependence recovery information	1300 273 266	www.reconnexion.org.au
Relationships Australia	Relationship counselling service	1300 364 277	www.relationships.com.au
Royal District Nursing Service	Home nursing	9536 5222	www.rdns.com.au
S afe Return Home	Registry for people at risk of getting lost	1800 112 201	www.safereturnhome.com.au
Safety Link	Personal alarm system	1800 813 617	www.safetylink.org.au
SANE	Information for people with a mental illness	1800 688 382	www.sane.org.au
Scope	Service for people with physical and multiple disabilities	9843 3000	www.scopevic.org.au
Social Work Department in Hospitals	Information, support and referral for patients in hospital and rehabilitation	White pages	www.whitepages.com.au

Agency	Description	Telephone	Web address
Stroke Association	Information for people affected by stroke	1800 787 653	www.strokefoundation.com.au
Suicide Helpline	Crisis telephone counseling service	1300 651 251	
TAC (Transport Accident Commission)	Financial assistance after transport accident	1800 332 556	www.tac.vic.gov.au
Taxi Directorate	Half-price taxi fares information	1800 638 802	www.taxi.vic.gov.au
The ALSO Foundation	Support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender seniors	9827 6999	www.also.org.au
TIS – Translating and Interpreting Service	Telephone interpreting service	131 450	
Together We Do Better	Vic Health Website promoting social connections		www.togetherwedobetter.vic.gov.au
V ictorian Aboriginal Health Service	Health services for aboriginals	9419 3000	www.vma.com.au/aboriginal.htm
Vic Health	Health Promotion agency	9667 1333	www.vichealth.vic.gov.au
Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)	Guardianship information	1800 133 055	www.vcat.vic.gov.au
Villamanta Legal Service	Free statewide community legal centre for people with disabilities	1800 014 111	www.villamanta.org.au
Vision Information Line	Information on services for people with vision impairment	1300 84 74 66	www.visionaustralia.org.au
VitalCall	Personal Alarm system	1300 360 808	www.vitalcall.com.au
W hite Pages	Residential telephone directory		www.whitepages.com.au
Y ellow Pages	Business telephone directory		www.yellowpages.com.au

Print and audio visual resources >

Title	What it's about	Where to get it
Time for a break	Listing of respite services in the Southern Metropolitan Region	Moira www.moira.org.au 8552 2222
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Home and Community Care in Victoria	Information about home and community care services for aboriginals	Seniors Information Victoria 1300 135 080 www.seniors.vic.gov.au
Help for carers	Guide to services and support for ageing parent carers	www.dhs.vic.gov.au
Eat well for life	A practical guide to dietary guidelines for older adults	Department of Health and Ageing and the Heart Foundation 1800 020 103 extension 8654 www.health.gov.au www.heartfoundation.com.au
Emergency care plan carers support kit	Emergency plan and contact list to complete for yourself	Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre 1800 059 059
Good food and health advice for older people	Information about good food for older people	Seniors Information Victoria 1300 135 090 Department of Human Services www.dhs.vic.gov.au/acmh/aged
Personal Alert Victoria	Explains personal alarm systems	Department of Human Services 9616 7777 www.health.vic.gov.au/agedcare
Take control	A guide to powers of attorney and guardianship	Office of the Public Advocate 1800 136 829 www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au
The carer experience	A guide for carers of people with dementia	Alzheimer's Australia 1800 639 331 www.alzheimers.org.au
What to do when someone dies	A guide to assist in coping with and preparing for bereavement	Centrelink 132 717
Audio visual resources		
Carers relaxation	An audio tape of guided relaxation exercises	Carers Victoria 1800 242 636 www.carersvic.org.au
The carer	A video about being a carer	Carers Victoria 1800 242 636 www.carersvic.org.au
Respite helps you find the balance	A video about carer experiences	Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre—Southern Region 1800 059 059

