

Self-Care for Families and Carers in Palliative Care

What is it?

Caring for someone who has a life-limiting illness is hard but rewarding. It is normal to feel very upset during this time. You may also feel scared, helpless, confused, worried and shocked.

As a carer, your effort will play a huge role in your loved one's final years of life. Make sure you have the support you need to maintain your mental and physical health. You also may need to adjust your work and home life, get more in-home support, and consider financial support. Talk to the care team if you need more support or help caring for your loved one.

What will my healthcare team do?

Your GP may talk to you about how you can best support your health while you care for your loved one. They may help you learn more about your loved one's symptoms and condition. They may talk to you about what is likely to happen in the future. They may also:

- Let you know your support options
- Tell you how to look after your health during this time
- Help you make informed choices for your loved one, this can include making an Advance Care Directive
- Assure you that your loved one's wishes will be respected

Your GP may see you often to check in with you and make sure you are coping. If you are finding it too hard to cope, your GP can refer you to a support service.

What questions could I ask my doctor?

- ☐ *How can I best support my health right now?*
- ☐ *Who can I talk to if I'm struggling to cope?*
- ☐ *How can I manage feelings of guilt?*



What can I do?

Talk to your GP often about how you are feeling. Always ask for help if you are struggling, your GP can refer you to a local support service. Living a healthy lifestyle will help you cope. Be sure to:

- Eat a healthy diet and stay active
- Limit drinking alcohol and quit smoking
- Get eight hours of sleep each night
- Reduce stress
- Continue to participate in hobbies or join a support group
- Have regular check-ups with your GP

What supports are available?

- **CarerHelp:** Visit carerhelp.com.au or call 72221 8233
- **Carers NSW:** Visit carersnsw.org.au or call 9280 4744
- **Carers Gateway:** Visit carergateway.gov.au or call 1800 422 737
- **Young Carers Network:** Visit youngcarersnetwork.com.au or call 1300 371 288

Where can I learn more?

- **Clinical Excellence Commission** – Last days of life toolkit: cec.health.nsw.gov.au
- **Palliative Care Australia** – Self-Care Matters: palliativecare.org.au