

Respite for Carers

Long term carers find that surviving is a matter of taking time out for themselves. Part of this may just be taking time for a cuppa during each day, but often longer breaks are needed.

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What is respite care?

Respite care is an essential part of the overall support that families may need. It can be provided in the client's home or in a variety of out of home settings. Since not all families have the same needs, respite care is usually flexible to fit in with a family's requirements.

Someone else takes over responsibility for the person you care for. It might be for a few hours, a day or longer. This may free some time for an exercise class, attend a wedding, weekly shopping or to go on holidays.

There are three main types of respite care:

- In home
- Day centres
- Residential (nursing homes, hostels or regional hospitals).

Who gets respite care?

Any carer can ask for respite. You don't have to be a full time carer. For example if your main duties are cooking then respite care can be organised for that.

Cost and frequency

Standard fees are charged for residential respite in a nursing home or hostel. Some services may be free, others a token fee while others may be expensive. Some services will have a sliding scale that is dependent on your income.

Most people who use respite do so regularly- often once or twice a week. They may also have a regular pattern of holiday respite set up for annual holidays. While respite is vital for people under a stressful situation, the ideal is to organise respite before your situation becomes difficult. Regular breaks are a central part of any stress management.

Look after yourself

Respite is a vital part of maintaining your health and sanity. Use the following checklist to see if are doing what you need to look after yourself:

- Ask for help when you need it
- Take time for yourself
- Exercise, eat well and rest
- Relax regularly
- Keep up social contacts
- Attend a carers group for support
- Access and use available services
- Acknowledge and deal with feelings.