

Why consider respite in a residential care facility?

The benefits of a longer break

Residential respite can give carers a long break from their caring responsibilities. Some but not all residential care facilities offer this - usually in blocks of two weeks or more, although some facilities offer overnight or weekend respite too. All care is provided, including meals and activities.

Carers say that residential respite has the following benefits:

- ▣ Gives you a longer break.
- ▣ Offers you another source of support, from facility staff.
- ▣ Helps you and your family member get to know the staff and learn what to expect from residential care.
- ▣ Challenges your views on residential care, which can make you feel better.
- ▣ Helps your family member become familiar with residential care, the routines and the environment.
- ▣ Can help you and your family member adjust to eventual separation.
- ▣ Helps in identifying the 'right' facility for the future.
- ▣ Assists carers and families with their decision-making.

*"I hated the thought of using residential respite.
But my worker was right - it helps me to keep on caring for Joe."*

Expect feelings of hesitation

It's natural to feel uncomfortable using residential respite for the first time. Leaving the person you care for in the care of someone else can be extremely difficult. This can be even harder if your family member is unable to communicate their needs, as with those who have dementia or have English as a second language.

Using respite in a residential care facility can highlight any fears you may have - carers often speak of feeling worried, guilty, ambivalent, anxious, lonely and sad. However, these feelings may be intermingled with a sense of relief, gratitude, calmness and relaxation.

Carers who have used residential respite, offer the following advice:

- ▣ Expect the house to seem quiet and perhaps lonely.
- ▣ Plan something for when you imagine will be the loneliest time (e.g. eat dinner with a friend or phone someone afterwards).
- ▣ Talk to someone who will understand how you feel.
- ▣ Sleep as needed day or night, to feel refreshed.
- ▣ Plan some outings or activities, or go away for a complete break.
- ▣ Organise other family members or friends to share the visiting.
- ▣ Remember that you are doing this to help you continue caring.



The challenges of using residential respite

Of course, there are challenges in using residential respite - and sometimes it can feel as though they outweigh the benefits. This might include:

- ▣ Coping with your own anxiety about whether your family member will manage and be comfortable in the care of others.
- ▣ Coping with your family member's resistance and anxiety.
- ▣ Needing to resettle them into familiar routines when they return home.

Carers manage these challenges in different ways, but usually feel more rested and able to deal with their caring role after the respite stay. It's important to know that information, advice, strategies and support is available to help you find ways around these difficulties. Contact:

- ▣ The Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre on 1800 052 222* - speak to a residential respite worker.
- ▣ The person-in-charge at the residential care facility.
- ▣ Your family member's GP.

Starting out with respite in a residential care facility

To start using respite in a residential care facility, your family member will need to be assessed by the Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS). The ACAS worker will complete the required paperwork that is then valid for up to 12 months.

Your family member's GP can organise this assessment for you, or you may contact ACAS directly - phone 1800 500 853 for the contact details of your local ACAS.

Also consider contacting your nearest Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre on 1800 059 059. Carer support workers and residential respite workers are available to discuss your respite needs. They can tell you about the respite options available, help you make a respite plan and then organise this. Carers who have used this service say that the assistance and support offered was invaluable.

Further information:

- ▣ [Aged Care Assessment](#) - information sheet.
- ▣ Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre - ph: 1800 052 222*

Contact the **Carer Line** on **1800 242 636*** to request the above information sheets be sent to you - or to find out about other information sheets in this series.

*Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.

We do our best to keep these links up to date, but the internet changes all the time. If you can no longer access any of the above resources, please go to our [Internet Troubleshooting Guide](#), or email us at website@carersvic.org.au