

## Tips for young carers

This fact sheet contains information and advice about coronavirus (COVID-19) specifically for young carers (25 years and under) caring for a family member or friend in New South Wales (NSW).

### Follow NSW Government guidelines

Official advice is changing constantly, so carers should refer to the [NSW Government website](#) for up to date information about what the current rules and recommendations are in NSW. It is important that carers observe official NSW Government guidelines to prevent transmission of the virus to themselves, those they care for, and the broader community.

- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds
- Stay 1.5m away from other people whenever you can
- Get tested if you have the symptoms



If you develop a cough, sore throat, a temperature of 38°C or higher and shortness of breath seek medical advice. Healthdirect Australia has developed a [COVID-19 Symptom Checker](#), an online self-guided tool to help people find out if they need to seek medical help.

### Support is available

Essential services remain available to young carers and the loved ones they are caring for. Many community, public and private mental health services have transitioned to telehealth based services, with some services continuing to offer in person support. Some are still offering limited face to face support within physical distancing guidelines.

If you are already accessing services, you can phone your service provider to find out how they are adapting to the challenges of COVID-19 and how they can help you and the person you care for. If you are not getting the support you need, you can contact:

- [Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service](#) on **1800 512 348**
- [Young Carer Program](#) at [Carers NSW](#) on **02 9280 4744** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)
- [Carer Gateway](#) on **1800 422 737** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm).
- [Kids Helpline](#) on **1800 551 800**
- [Lifeline](#) on **13 11 14**
- [headspace](#)
- If you or someone you are with is in immediate danger, please call **000**.

### Stay well

- **Maintain a healthy diet:** A good diet will improve your physical health and give you strength and stamina. Eat a healthy, balanced diet and eat at regular times each day.
- **Practise relaxation techniques:** Close your eyes and breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose and out through your mouth. Repeat ten times. This is a way of switching off, even if just for a few moments.
- **Practise gratitude:** Keep a piece of paper or a notebook next to your bed and start your day by writing down one or two things you are grateful for. These are the little things you appreciate, like when you wake up in the morning and the sun is shining.



- **Make time for you:** Find a space where you feel most comfortable, and then spend the time however you like! Taking time out to do an activity that you like helps to recharge the batteries and allows you to better cope with stress.
- **Get a good night's sleep:** Avoid caffeinated drinks or energy drinks in the evening and explore ways to wind down before bed. Meditation, listening to music or reading can help if you have difficulty falling asleep. [headspace](#) offers a number of free programs to help you sleep and meditate.



*"For me, yoga and other meditation techniques have been utterly useful in relaxing myself in such stressful times. It doesn't have to take long (just a couple of minutes) but you feel so refreshed afterwards!" – Young carer, 19*



## Stay connected

- Explore the many free digital methods for maintaining individual and group catch ups, such as video call platforms like [Zoom](#), [FaceTime](#) and [Facebook Messenger](#). Visit the [Carer Peer Connect](#) website to read more about the digital platforms available and how to use them.
- Call or text your loved ones regularly on the phone. Reach out when you need to talk, and schedule reminders to connect with those who may be feeling isolated or anxious.
- Write a card or letter to someone you care about. You can post it to them, or if they live near you, drop it in their letterbox while you exercise.

*"Video calling has been awesome to be able to connect with friends – particularly those who I had lost contact with over the years because we've been busy!" – Young carer, 19*

## Keep your body and mind active

- **Stay active:** Exercise eases both physical and mental stress. Remain physically active in a way that you enjoy (walking, yoga, stretching, or jogging). Remember to keep a good distance from people walking around you and wash or sanitise your hands when you return home. If you can't get out, explore the many free online workouts and classes.
- **Structure your time:** Develop a routine that includes time for exercise, times to connect with friends and family, times for leisure activities that you enjoy, and times for undertaking jobs around the house.
- **Try something new:** Cook a dish you have never cooked before, start a new puzzle or book, learn a new skill, or reach out for support in a way you have not done before.
- **Record your experiences** of this challenging time in a journal or through creative activities.



*"I've found it really helpful to find a routine. I like to start the day with working out and a good brekky then breaking the day into chunks dedicated for "me time" and schoolwork." – Young carer, 18*