

**03**

**TAKING CARE  
OF YOU**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Caring can be physically and emotionally draining and many carers put their own needs last. It is important to keep yourself healthy and make your wellbeing a priority. Clicking on the underlined topic will take you straight to that page.

- 03 [Understanding self care and why it is important](#)
- 04 [Examples of self care activities](#)
- 05 [Taking care of your mental health](#)
- 06 [Strategies for better mental health](#)
- 07 [The importance of healthy eating](#)
- 08 [Eating strategies for busy people](#)
- 09 [The importance of exercise](#)
- 10 [Strategies to stay active](#)
- 11 [Taking a regular break - respite care](#)
- 12 [Where to get more support](#)
- 14 [Disclaimer](#)

**Disclaimer:**

This module is designed to provide entry level content and more complex care/caring needs or specific issues should be addressed by a health professional.



Clicking this home button will bring you back to this page

# EXPLAINING SELF CARE

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## WHAT

Looking after yourself means taking care of your physical and emotional health. You can do this by identifying your own needs and taking steps to meet them.

## WHY

Caring can be physically and emotionally draining. Many carers put their own needs last. It is important to treat yourself as well as the person you are caring for.

## WHEN

There will be opportunities to do something for yourself every day. From making healthy food choices, to booking in routine medical appointments, to planning some respite.

## WHERE

Talk to your doctor about any health concerns you may have and be sure to have your regular check-ups.

Talk to Carer Gateway about your specific needs as a carer. Call **1800 422 737** or visit [here](#).

Read more tips on self care with Carers NSW [here](#).

# HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOU

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**1. Manage your stress** – identify things that stress you. Create a plan for things you can change. Try to accept things you cannot. Learn to say no.

**2. Eat well** – a good diet will improve your physical health and give you strength and stamina. See [page 7](#)

**3. Stay active** – regular exercise improves resilience, strength and flexibility, promotes better sleep and increases energy. See [page 9](#)

**4. Take a break** – take time out to recharge. Go for a stroll, ask friends or family to give you a break, or book a respite service.

**5. Stay connected** – talk with family and friends. Join a carer support group to talk with people who have been through the same things as you.

**6. Ask for help** – you may need more help in the home, practical tips, a respite service or counselling. Don't be afraid to ask for help. See [page 13](#)



# EXAMPLES OF SELF CARE ACTIVITIES

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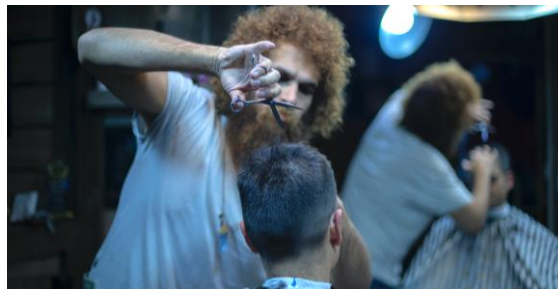
**1.** Take time out to stretch, go for a walk, do some moderate exercises each day.



**2.** Play music to lift your mood. Find time to express yourself through music or dance.



**3.** Use technology to help with shopping, staying in touch with family and friends.



**4.** Book in an activity you enjoy such as coffee with a friend, or getting your hair and nails done.



**5.** Set a time to enjoy arts, crafts or a calming activity like knitting, jigsaw puzzles or Sudoku.



# TAKING CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

## WHAT

Mental health is about being cognitively, emotionally and socially happy; not just the absence of a mental health condition.

## WHY

It's important to look after your mental health. You need to stay strong, not only for the person you are supporting, but also for yourself.

## WHEN

Mental health problems are very common. In fact 1 in 5 people will have a concern at some point in their lives. Seek help if you have noticed changes in the way you think or feel. Seeking help early can speed up your recovery.

## WHERE

**If you or the person you care for has suicidal thoughts phone triple zero (000) immediately.**

Talk to your **doctor** about any concerns you may have, like the symptoms listed on the right.

If you are struggling with your caring role, call Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737** or visit [here](#).

# WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR



Feeling unhappy or depressed



Feeling anxious or worried



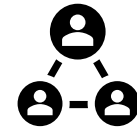
Angry or emotional outbursts



Alcohol or substance abuse



Changes in appetite or weight



Withdrawing from friends and/or family



Feeling worthless or guilty



Increased tiredness or sleep problems



Changes in behavior



Lifeline **13 11 14** | Beyond Blue **1300 224 636** | Kids Helpline **1800 55 1800**

# STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING BETTER MENTAL HEALTH

Where possible, try to implement these strategies:



# HEALTHY EATING

## WHAT

Food and eating are an important part of the way we live our lives. A well balanced diet includes all the nutrients our bodies need to function properly.

## WHY

A good diet will help you feel good, give you more energy, improve your health and lift your mood. A relaxed meal with others improves your social and emotional wellbeing.

## WHEN

Choose healthy food options every day. This includes eating breakfast, lunch and dinner. Keep a variety of healthy snack options in the house to reduce temptation. And try not to be too hard on yourself on days where you don't eat as healthy as you would like to.

## WHERE

Always consult with your **doctor** or a **dietitian** about your individual dietary needs, especially if you have food sensitivities or health conditions in need of a special diet.

To learn more about free telephone health coaching call **1300 806 258** or watch:



# HOW TO EAT HEALTHY

1. Use the healthy eating pyramid to make good food decisions - See [page 8](#)

2. Know what you are eating – read the nutrition information panel on food products

3. Try to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner each day – keep some healthy snack options in the house and in your bag – See [page 8](#)

4. Drink plenty of water – try to drink six to eight 150 ml glasses of fluid every day, including water, tea, juice and milk

5. Use mindful eating, take your time and enjoy your meal – only eat as much food as your body needs; you should feel full but not stuffed

6. Always seek professional advice about your specific health care needs, weight loss or weight gain - your doctor can refer you to a dietitian



# STRATEGIES FOR BUSY PEOPLE

## Australian Guide to Healthy Eating

Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five food groups every day. Drink plenty of water.



Use small amounts



Only sometimes and in small amounts



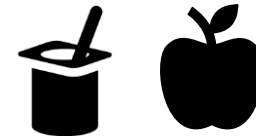
1. Plan your meals in advance, this can be a weekly or monthly plan.



2. Reduce cooking time by making one pot meals like soups or stews. Cook extra so you have leftovers.



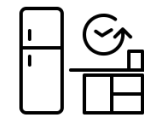
4. Carry healthy snacks with you to keep your energy levels up and avoid temptation.



3. Order groceries online and have them delivered to your door.



5. Keep a well stocked fridge and pantry with pasta, canned goods.



6. Consider meal delivery services like Tender Loving Cuisine or Hello Fresh.





# THE IMPORTANCE OF EXERCISE

## WHAT

Staying physically active is the single most important thing you can do to stay fit and healthy. To count as physical activity it needs to get your heart rate up.

## WHY

Regular exercise improves energy levels, strength and flexibility. It also reduces stress, depression and common health problems. Activity can help you lose weight and build immunity.

## WHEN

It is recommended you try to do 30 minutes of physical activity each day. This can be broken up into 10-minute lots. Try not to be too hard on yourself on days where you are not as active as you would like.

## WHERE

Always consult your **doctor** first if you have not exercised for a while. Your doctor can refer you to a physiotherapist for a personal exercise plan.

Check out the active and healthy website for tips and exercises [here](#). To learn more about free telephone health coaching call **1300 806 258** or watch:



# HOW TO BE MORE ACTIVE

1. Speak to your doctor first if you have not exercised for a while or have a pre-existing health issue

2. Begin small by starting with a few stretches or exercises. Build your confidence by following an exercise program online, on TV or a DVD.

3. Find an exercise you enjoy – this could be walking, tai chi, boxing, swimming, dancing, aerobics, cycling or joining a gym

4. Set a time for yourself to be active – you may stretch for 10 minutes each morning, plan a 10 minute walk at lunch and do 10 minutes of yoga at night

5. Try to build activity in to your day – walk to the shops, take the stairs, do the vacuuming or gardening

6. Reward yourself (in a healthy way) – go out for dinner or a movie, buy a book or DVD, have lunch with a friend



# STRATEGIES TO STAY ACTIVE

Most of us find it difficult to put aside time for exercise but as little as 30 minutes of moderate activity every day will help you to sustain the physical and emotional demands of your caring role. There are many different options to suit your interests, fitness levels and budget.



[Active and Healthy website](#)

# TAKE A BREAK – RESPITE CARE

## WHAT

Respite or respite care is when someone else takes care of the person you usually care for so you can have a short break, a holiday or a rest. Emergency respite is when the carer needs help when unwell, in a crisis or going to hospital.

## WHY

Regular respite can give you the time you need to take a break, recharge the batteries, focus on your needs or do everyday activities in or out of the home. It can reduce stress, fatigue and the chance of burnout.

## WHEN

It is important to take time for yourself to rest and recharge, whether it is for a few hours a week, overnight, over the weekend

or for a few weeks at a time.

## WHERE

Respite care can be provided by family or friends, or a professional respite service.

Care can be provided in your home, a family member's home, a day care centre, cottage, or nursing home.

If you need emergency respite care, talk with Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737**.

Watch video on respite here:



# HOW TO PLAN YOUR RESPITE

1. Speak to the person you care for about the importance of taking a break and the range of options available

2. Consider whether any family and friends can offer regular support. Discuss the care involved as recorded in your emergency care plan. See module 6.

3. Talk to Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737** about your needs as a carer and funding options, which may be used for respite

4. Talk to My Aged Care on **1800 200 422** about access to the different respite options, including a paid worker coming to your home, going to a day care centre, staying overnight at a cottage or going into a nursing home for a week or more

5. Talk to your local council about day care services for older people – they may cater to specific groups such as people living with dementia

**Reminder** – emergency respite care can be arranged by calling Carer Gateway on **1800 422 737** and speaking to the local service delivery provider.



# ACCESSING SUPPORT NETWORKS

Everyone can benefit from some support from time to time. This could be in the form of building your knowledge and skill base, connecting with other carers, taking a break (respite), arranging extra care and support or seeking specialist help. Connecting with the following services may be helpful.

## Carers NSW



A blue button with a clock icon and the text "1 minute PEER CONNECTION BENEFITS" and "CLICK HERE FOR MORE".



A blue button with a clock icon and the text "1 minute ONLINE PEER CONNECTION" and "CLICK HERE FOR MORE".

As the peak non-government organisation for carers in NSW, Carers NSW works continually to improve carer recognition, inclusion and support among governments, service providers, employers and the community.

Carers NSW is the dedicated Carer Gateway service provider for Hunter New England, Central Coast and North Coast of NSW.

Call **(02) 9280 4744** weekdays from 9am to 5pm or visit [here](#).

## Gather My Crew



A video thumbnail for "Gather My Crew" featuring a woman with red glasses and a red headscarf. The text "1 minute" is overlaid on the video. Below the video is a blue button with the text "CLICK HERE FOR MORE".

Gather my crew allows carers to connect and organise a network of support. This may be family members, friends, neighbours or colleagues who are keen to offer assistance. Gather my crew helps with organising people to complete tasks which are useful.

Visit [here](#) to read more.



# WHERE TO GET MORE SUPPORT

Caring for someone can be challenging, and at times everyone will need some support. This could be in the form of building your knowledge and skill base, connecting with other carers, taking a break (respite), arranging extra care and support or seeking specialist help. Connecting with the following services may be helpful.

## The role of My Aged Care

My Aged Care offers a range of tailored services and supports to help people maintain their quality of life as they get older.

A video thumbnail for My Aged Care. It features a clock icon with '1 minute' next to it. Below the clock, it says 'Visit www.myagedcare.gov.au' and 'Or call 1800 200 422'. At the bottom, there are logos for the Australian Government and My Aged Care. A blue button at the bottom says 'CLICK HERE FOR MORE'.

Call **1800 200 422** weekdays from 8am to 8pm, Saturdays from 10am till 2pm.

Visit [here](#) to read more.

## The role of Carer Gateway

The Carer Gateway offers a range of tailored services and supports to help carers manage challenges, reduce stress and plan ahead for the future.

A video thumbnail for Carer Gateway. It features a clock icon with '30 seconds' next to it. The background shows a person's face in profile. A blue button at the bottom says 'CLICK HERE FOR MORE'.

Call **1800 422 737** weekdays 8am to 5pm to discuss your needs.  
Call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergency respite.

Visit [here](#) for online supports.

## The role of Dementia Australia

Dementia Australia provides support, education and information for people living with dementia, their families and carers.

A video thumbnail for Dementia Australia. It features a clock icon with '30 seconds' next to it. The background is black with the text 'YOU ARE NOT ALONE' in green and 'KNOWLEDGE CAN BE KEY' in white. A blue button at the bottom says 'CLICK HERE FOR MORE'.

Call the National Dementia Helpline with concerns for yourself or the person you care for on **1800 100 500** weekdays from 9am to 5pm.

Visit [here](#) to read more.



Refer to **Module 2** for more information on My Aged Care and Carer Gateway

# DISCLAIMER

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**All of the content in this resource is for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for advice provided by a doctor or other qualified health professional. The information in this resource is true and correct at time of publishing.**

**Carers NSW thanks the many carers involved in the development of this information for sharing their experiences and suggestions for the benefit of other carers.**

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