

Supporting carers through the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly changed the way we live, how we interact and connect with others, and how we access support and services. For the many Australians who support a partner, family member, friend or colleague experiencing mental ill-health, this has been an especially challenging time.

During this period of uncertainty, carers may be feeling anxious, worried or stressed. It is understandable to feel concerned, particularly if the person you support is vulnerable. It is important, however, to look after your mental health and wellbeing during this challenging time – for yourself, and the person you care for.

The following fact sheet provides information and resources that may be helpful while navigating the ongoing challenges of the pandemic.

COVID-19 advice for carers

Carers Australia

Providing COVID-19 advice for carers on a range of topics, including:

- Official information
- Caring advice
- Aged care
- Disability support
- Social Security and other forms of Government Assistance.

Learn more: www.carersaustralia.com.au/coronavirus-information/covid-19-advice-for-carers

Carers NSW

Providing a range of fact sheets and guides to support carers through crisis, including specific resources for COVID-19.

Learn more: www.carersnsw.org.au/resources/carer-resources

Carer Gateway

Providing practical advice and support for carers across Australia, including COVID-19 information.

Learn more: www.carergateway.gov.au

COVID-19 support

Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service

The Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service is a free, 24/7 national support service to help people manage their wellbeing and mental health during the pandemic.

Call: 1800 512 348

Learn more: www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

Lifeline

Lifeline provides all Australians experiencing emotional distress with access to 24 hour crisis support and suicide prevention services.

Call: 13 11 14

Learn more: www.lifeline.org.au

Do you support or care for someone with symptoms of depression or anxiety?

Minds Together is an online program aiming to support carers in their role and promote their mental health and wellbeing.

Learn more about the program, and how you can participate in the latest national trial, by visiting www.eveymind.org.au/mindstogether

Self-care ideas for carers

There are many ways to practise self-care. There is no 'one size fits all' approach. Some strategies that may help you uncover what self-care methods are right for you include:

- Reflecting on what activities help you recharge and relax
- Identifying if there are new activities or experiences you would like to try.

Below are some suggested ways to look after your mental health which you may find useful.

Mindfulness is a process by which you bring your attention to experiences occurring in the present moment without judgement.

Eating well has been associated with feelings of wellbeing and helps with sleeping patterns, energy levels, and general health.

Regular exercise has consistently been shown to increase mental health and wellbeing.

Sleeping well and sleep hygiene also contributes to your self-care.

Social connection helps to improve physical and psychological wellbeing, and being part of a community (a group of people you can relate to) can provide a sense of belonging and social connectedness.

Engaging in social and productive activities you enjoy like taking an art class or becoming a volunteer in your community, can help maintain your wellbeing.

Support for first responders and their families

Many Australian's have been impacted by the challenges of COVID-19, none more so than first responders and their families.

FORTEM Australia supports the mental health and wellbeing of first responders and their families.

If you are a partner, family member, friend or colleague supporting a first responder, the following resources and information may be helpful during these challenging times.

- Lockdown resources to help first responders and the wider community
- FORTEM talks living and working in these challenging times
- Virtual events gives Victorian first responders a much-needed break
- The harder courage – going beyond your comfort zone
- Suicide first-aid training to build strength in first responder community
- FORTEM resource library