
Different stages of caring

Summary

- For many carers, their care role changes as the person's needs change – sometimes the person will need more carer support and other times less.
 - You can plan for an increase in your care role by asking others to help and by looking into government supports that are available, such as respite, other types of support and the Carer Payment.
 - Many people feel lost when their care role ends or winds down because they no longer support someone. Speak with a friend or family member or visit your local doctor for help with ways to manage your feelings of loss or grief.
 - If you are receiving a Carer Payment, remember to let Centrelink know if your circumstances change.
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For some people, their role as a carer remains much the same for a long time if the person they care for has a condition, such as a physical disability, that neither improves nor deteriorates much over time. For others, the role can change gradually or dramatically with the changing needs of the person they care for.

These changes do not always follow a set course. In some cases, carers may move in and out of different stages of caring. Their role might intensify for a time and then ease off because the person they are caring for goes through a period of improvement.

Be prepared by seeking information from your healthcare professional about how to prepare for a change in the condition of the person you care for. This may involve preparing for new equipment or alterations to a living space, additional assistance from others, a change in financial requirements, finding out what services and other aid you, or the person you care for, may be able to access.

When your care role increases

Prepare for changes to your care role in case the person you care for has a condition that degenerates. Involve others where possible and seek assistance from community and government services designed to help you and the person you care for. You may also:

- ask other family members or friends of the person to help out or increase their care involvement
- investigate options for respite care
- investigate financial support from the government in the form of a carers allowance
- apply for aids and equipment via the **Victorian Aids and Equipment Program**.

When your care role end or decreases

The loss of your care role can make a significant impact on your life.

If you are feeling down or lost after your care role ends, it is a good idea to speak to someone. Start by sharing your thoughts and feelings with family or close friends, or speak to a healthcare professional. Your local doctor may be a good place to start. Your doctor might refer you to a counsellor if you need some extra support.

Many carers continue to support a person who has moved to other accommodation, such as a residential aged care facility.

Respite, support and carers payment

The Victorian Government has various respite and support services for carers of older people with care needs, and carers of people with a disability or a mental illness. These services can give you a break from your care role or support you and the person you care for to enjoy an outing together.

If you are receiving a Carer Payment from the Commonwealth Government, it is important to let the Commonwealth Department of Human Services know if your circumstances change. If your role increases, you might be able to get a higher payment. Similarly, if your role decreases, you may need to have your carer payment decreased accordingly.

You can, however, take up to 63 days per year for respite without affecting your carer payment. Another 63-day carer payment applies if the person goes into hospital (as long as you will continue to care for them when they come out). The period is longer if the person you care for is a child aged under 16.

If the person you are caring for dies, you may be entitled to a bereavement payment. In this case, you will need to get in touch with Centrelink for a review of your financial circumstances.

It is worth remembering that if you do not report changes to your circumstances within 14 days, and this results in you being overpaid, you will have to pay the extra money back.

Where to get help

- Your doctor (GP)
- **Counsellor**
- **Carers Victoria**, call (03) 9396 9500

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