
Emergency or crisis support for carers

Summary

- Having an emergency care plan will mean you are prepared with instructions in case of an emergency or crisis.
 - Advance care planning involves thinking about what types of healthcare the person you care for may or may not wish to receive in different situations.
 - If you are unable to look after someone for a while, there are emergency respite services available.
 - If you think the person you care for is experiencing a life-threatening emergency, call triple zero (000).
 - For 24-hour medical advice over the phone, call NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24 to speak to a registered nurse.
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The best way to deal with a crisis or emergency is to be prepared for one. This means having a plan that you (or the person you care for) can action in the case of an emergency or crisis. If you do not have a plan in place, it is good to know about the emergency and crisis supports you can call on to help.

Planning ahead

In moments of crisis, many people find it hard to think clearly. That's why it is a good idea to plan ahead when things are calmer and you have the chance to consider all options. Writing your plans down is a good way to make sure you and others involved in the person's life will know what to do in an emergency. It is a way of making sure the person's care needs and treatment preferences are respected if you are not available to advocate for them.

Emergency care plans

An emergency care plan is a set of instructions about caring for someone in the event that you are not able to. Having such a plan in place will assure you, and the person you care for, that there will be somebody there with clear instructions about what to do.

Emergency care plans cover areas such as emergency contacts, health information, what care is required and information about the person's medication.

The Australian Government has created a template for developing an emergency care plan. [**Visit the Department of Health**](#) website to download your free copy.

When creating the emergency care plan:

- Think about the best people to care for the person if you cannot, and ask if they are willing to be an emergency contact. Your 'stand ins' need to understand and accept the commitment they are taking on. Make sure they are clear about the tasks they would be expected to perform in your absence.
- Make sure each of your emergency contacts has a copy of the plan. Discuss the plan with them so you can rest assured they understand what is required.
- Keep your copy of the plan in a safe but easy-to-find place.
- Update your plan yearly or whenever there are significant changes to your caring situation.

Advance care planning

There may come a time where the person you care for can no longer communicate their needs or wishes. This might be a temporary or permanent situation. It is therefore a good idea to get some paperwork in place that will allow you to speak and make decisions on their behalf.

Advance care planning involves thinking about what types of healthcare the person you care for may or may not wish to receive in different situations. Talk to the person and make sure you understand how they want to be treated. Write this down so everyone involved is clear about the person's wishes.

Make sure the person's doctor has a copy of this plan and also send a copy to the hospital the person visits most regularly. Ask for it to be included in their medical record.

In some instances, the person may wish to complete a Refusal of Treatment Certificate if they wish to refuse treatment related to a specific illness they have. Your doctor needs to help you to complete this form.

You can also ask for help from a lawyer to draw up an enduring power of attorney (medical treatment). This is a legally binding document that assigns you permission to make medical decisions on the person's behalf in the event that they are unable to.

Emergency respite care

If you are unable to look after the person for a while (for example, you have to go to hospital or have another situation that you need to manage), and there is no one else who can step in, emergency respite care may have services available.

Call your local **Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre** on 1800 052 222 for information about available services in your area.

Emergency medical help

If you think the person you care for is experiencing a life-threatening emergency, call triple zero (000). Triple zero (000) can send an ambulance and give emergency advice over the phone.

A life-threatening emergency is where a person has either:

- severe injuries from large burns, accidents, wounds or trauma
- difficulty breathing
- chest pain
- loss of consciousness
- severe abdominal pain
- bleeding
- head injuries.

When **calling triple zero** (000) remember to:

- speak calmly and do not shout
- tell the operator exactly where you are
- listen carefully to the operator and follow any instructions they give
- stay on the phone, as the operator may be able to help you until emergency staff arrive.

If the situation is serious but not life threatening, and you are able to drive, take the person to your nearest hospital emergency department. Emergency departments see people in order of medical priority, so more urgent cases are seen before less urgent ones. This means that people are not necessarily seen in the order they arrive.

Over-the-phone medical help

Other sources of 24-hour help and advice include:

- **NURSE-ON-CALL** (health information helpline provided by registered nurses), call 1300 60 60 24
- **Victorian Poisons Information Centre**, call 131 126 24
- **Lifeline** (confidential telephone counselling to discuss personal issues), call 13 11 14
- **SuicideLine** (telephone and online counselling for people considering suicide or self-harm), call 1300 651 251.

Where to get help

betterhealth.vic.gov.au

- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000)
- **NURSE-ON-CALL**, call 1300 60 60 24
- **Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre**, call 1800 052 222.
- **Carers Victoria**, call (03) 9396 9500

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Department of Health and Human Services

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