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## Living at home as you get older

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### Summary

- Many older people choose to live at home for as long as possible as there are many benefits that come with maintaining your independence for longer.
  - Staying connected to your family, friends, social groups and community is an important part of keeping healthy and staying independent as you get older.
  - Setting a routine can help you keep up with day-to-day tasks. If you or a family member needs help with personal care or household tasks, you may want to apply for home care services through the Home and Community Care (HACC) program or a Home Care Package.
  - Contact NURSE-ON-CALL on 1300 60 60 24 for immediate, confidential expert health advice from a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
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Most older people want to live at home for as long as possible and there are lots of benefits that come with maintaining your independence for longer. There are many things you can do yourself and support services you can use to help you keep living at home for as long as possible.

### Hobbies and interests

Maintaining a healthy and active mind is important, so if you have a particular hobby or interest, keep doing it. If you're finding it hard to continue with it, talk to your family or carer about how they can help you maintain these interests.

Maintaining your social, family and community connections, continuing to exercise your body and mind, and focusing on the things that you enjoy will help you stay healthy, positive and motivated.

### Staying connected with your social networks

Staying connected to your friends, social groups and family members is an important part of maintaining your independence and keeping healthy.

It's important to keep going to the family, social gatherings and community activities that you enjoy.

### Transport – getting around

In order to stay connected and independent, you need to be able to travel to the places, events and activities you want to go to. There are many transport options available to help you get around.

### Driving

If you drive a car, you don't have to stop just because you're getting older. Your health and behaviour determines whether you can keep your driver licence, not your age. Older drivers are just as safe as other age groups on the road.

VicRoads provides **information for older drivers** who want to continue driving safely and be alert to health changes that may make it unsafe for them to drive.

You may decide to stop driving on your own or you may have to give up your driver licence if you are no longer healthy enough to keep driving. If you have health problems or you aren't sure if you can drive safely, you may be asked to have an assessment to see if it is still safe for you to drive. These rules are in place to keep everyone safe on the road. Even if you can no longer drive, you can still keep your independence and social connections. Your family, a friend or a carer may be able to drive you to where you need to go or you can take a taxi. You can

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talk with your local doctor about how to get reduced taxi fares. The **Multi Purpose Taxi Program** offers half price travel for people who are not able to use public transport. Call 1800 638 802 for more details.

### **Public transport**

There are many public transport options you can try, including buses and trains (many of which have easy access and priority seating for older people). Some organisations and local councils provide free community buses for people to get to and from their venue.

Visit **Public Transport Victoria**.

### **Looking after yourself**

As you get older, you may find it harder to look after yourself or do your household chores on your own. If you or someone you are caring for is not eating properly, letting the house get dirty or not bathing, it could be time to change how things are done.

You may need to see an occupational therapist or physiotherapist to get aids and equipment or home modifications that can help you to do your day-to-day living tasks.

If you are concerned about your personal hygiene or ability to cope with day-to-day tasks, talk to them about getting home care services, which may include delivered meals through the Home and Community Care (HACC) program, or a Home Care Package. You can also purchase delivered meals from private enterprises.

If you are caring for someone, ask them if they need help with anything such as shopping, cooking, taking the bins out or cleaning the bathroom. Sometimes, what may seem like very simple tasks can be overwhelming for older people and they may not want or be able to do these things anymore.

### **Living safely at home**

There are a lot of different ways to keep living safely and independently for longer. Some ideas are:

- Choose high-wattage light bulbs to keep your house well lit.
- Fix or remove any unsteady furniture and loose carpet and rugs.
- Add handrails and other mobility aids to help you get around easily.
- Get all your heaters and appliances serviced regularly.
- Install safety switches and timers on any electrical or gas devices.
- Arrange for family, friends or neighbors to check on your wellbeing daily.
- Establish some community watch activities, including developing a signal for assistance (for example, raising the front room blinds each morning can signal everything is okay, but uncollected newspapers and mail may mean someone needs help).
- Get a private alarm call service. Find personal alarm call services in the Yellow Pages – alerting systems and services – or google personal alarm call services Victoria for private services to consider purchasing
- Consider a telephone/mobile phone that can be programmed to automatically call or send a text message to up to four numbers when a switch is flicked. Some telephones have functions that help people with impaired mobility. These may come with emergency pendants that activate calls to programmed numbers.

If you are having trouble seeing what things need to be fixed, such as loose fittings or broken power points, ask a family member to help you with regular checks around the house.

If you are worried about having a fall or needing assistance during the night, getting a personal alarm might be a good option for you.

Find personal alarm call services in the Yellow Pages – alerting systems and services – or google personal alarm call services Victoria for private services to consider purchasing. You could also consider whether you might be eligible for Personal Alert Victoria. See **fact sheet**.

### **Home care services**

Sometimes it can be hard to do all the day-to-day things that you need to – you may forget to do things like take your medication or feed your pets, or you may find it physically too hard to change a lightbulb or weed the garden.

There are many home care services available that can give you help with day-to-day tasks and help you keep living at home.

Home help can be as simple as getting help with meals and transport or it can involve a higher level of care, such as help with bathing, dressing or home nursing.

Talk to your doctor or local council about home care support services available or call My Aged Care on 1800 200 422 to find out more.

For more information see the [Changing needs in aged care](#) and [Healthcare and support at home](#) fact sheets.

### **How families and carers can help**

It's a good idea to talk and work with your family, friends and carers to find ways to make your living situation better so you can be confident and independent at home.

They may need to accept some level of risk in order for you to stay living independently and maintain your confidence and self-esteem.

### **Where to get help**

- Your GP (doctor)
- [Aged Care Assessment Services](#)
- Your local council
- [Carers Victoria](#) , call 1800 242 636
- [My Aged Care](#) , call 1800 200 422
- [Council on the Ageing Victoria](#) , call (03) 9654 4443
- [Aged Care Complaints Scheme](#) , call 1800 550 552
- [Personal Alert Victoria](#)

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