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## Living in a residential aged care home

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### Summary

- Whichever home you choose, it will take some time to adjust to a new way of life.
  - Many residential aged care homes have lifestyle and leisure staff whose job it is to organise social and recreational activities. How often you get involved is up to you.
  - Living in a residential aged care home is no different to living in your own home, you can come and go as often as you please, visit friends, go shopping or attend sporting events as long as your health allows. You choose how you will manage your money. You may want to take care of it yourself or you may want to ask a family member to manage your finances through a power of attorney or enduring power of attorney.
  - You can prepare an advance care plan so that if you become seriously ill, your family will be able to organise medical treatment for you that is in line with your wishes.
  - Give the name of the executor of your will to your residential aged care home so they have it on hand if they need it. The executor of your will can finalise any accounts and organise any repayments to your estate.
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All residential aged care homes (also known as a 'residential aged care services') are different and offer a range of care, services and activities to suit your needs and preferences.

When you are choosing a residential aged care home, it is a good idea to develop a list of the types of care and services you want, consider your social, physical and spiritual needs, and any other things that matter to you. Whichever home you choose, it will take some time to get used to a new way of life, a new environment and new people.

### Settling in at a new residential aged care home

The best way to settle into a residential aged care home is to join in some of the social activities. This will help you develop new friendships with other residents and is a great way to 'break the ice' and get used to your new surroundings.

Having regular visits from your family will help you settle in, as will talking to the staff about how you are feeling. The staff are there to give you the support you need.

### Staying independent in a residential aged care home

If you move into a residential aged care home you are still free to vote, manage your own money and come and go as you please. Your family and friends are free to visit, and you can travel if you are fit enough to do so. Staff will respect your right to privacy.

Residential aged care homes provide a range of social activities and events, but it is always up to you how you choose to spend your time. The staff members in residential aged care homes are there to help you enjoy your life. You may want to focus on your own interests and hobbies, spend your time with family, or attend social events and get to know the other residents.

Talk to the staff at your residential aged care home if you need help making appointments to see your usual doctor or dentist. The staff can make the call and accompany you as well as organise transport if needed. Depending on the home, you may have to cover the cost of transport and staff time.

### Social activities in a residential aged care home

It is important that you still feel connected to your family, friends and the local community. Encourage your loved ones to come and visit and make regular trips to see them if your health permits.

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It is expected that all residential aged care homes will offer a lifestyle and leisure program for residents. Some homes have lifestyle and leisure staff whose job it is to organise social and recreational activities. How often you get involved is up to you. There are usually open discussions about what will be organised in the future, so if you would like to have a say in what activities are organised, it's a good idea to join in these meetings.

Talk to the staff about your interests so they can support you and have the things you need to pursue them. If you are not able to get to the shops, the staff may be able to help you buy anything you need.

If you do not have family or friends nearby, or are feeling lonely, the Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) matches volunteers to people living in government-subsidised aged care homes. Each state and territory of Australia has CVS coordinators who can find you a visitor or link you in to a social group in your aged care home. If you want a community visitor, let your aged care home know. Staff from the organisation who run the scheme will talk to you about your background and interests, and organise a regular visitor for you.

To find out how more about how to get a community visitor, speak with staff at your aged care home, contact your local CVS Network Member or call My Aged Care on 1800200422.

### **Coming and going**

Once you have been offered a place in a residential aged care home, you will be able to stay there for as long as it meets your needs. However, there may be times when you have to leave the home to receive the care you need, for example, if you have to go into hospital.

You are free to come and go from the home as often as your health allows. You can visit friends, go shopping or attend sporting events.

If you take a holiday from the home (referred to as 'social leave'), you cannot be away for more than 52 nights in the financial year (if you have a government-funded place). Your daily payments and income-tested fees will remain the same, whether you are away on holiday or not.

If you need to go into hospital for any reason, your place in the home will always be reserved for you. Any time you spend in hospital will not count towards the 52-night social leave limit.

### **Moving to another residential aged care home**

If your first choice of residential aged care home was not available, you might have an opportunity to move to another home when a place becomes available.

There are some situations when you may be asked to leave a residential aged care home, including:

- The aged care home is about to close.
- The home cannot provide the right kind of aged care accommodation for you.
- The home cannot offer the kind of care you need.
- Your aged care fees are late and the reasons are within your control.

### **Changing rooms within a residential aged care home**

If you are not happy with your room, you can ask the manager of the residential aged care home to change your room. The manager will look at your situation, take into account the home's needs, and then let you know if changing rooms will be possible straight away or some time in the future. Sometimes you may be asked to change rooms if your care needs change or if the home is doing repairs or maintenance.

### **Managing your money in a residential aged care home**

How you manage your money is up to you. You may want to take care of it yourself or you may want to ask a family member to manage your finances through a power of attorney or enduring power of attorney.

If you are finding it confusing setting up direct debit payments and keeping up with regular bills, talk to a staff member about getting some help.

For more information see the [\*\*Who manages my money\*\*](#) fact sheet on the My Aged Care website.

### **Putting together a care plan in a residential aged care home**

Once you have arrived, the support staff at your new residential aged care home will work with you to put together a care plan. The plan will outline any needs you have, along with your preferences, so that every member of staff knows what to do for you.

If you have an existing care plan that was put together by your doctor or community health nurse, you can bring that with you.

For more information see the [Health and personal care](#) fact sheet on the My Aged Care website.

### **Advance care planning and making a will**

As you get older, it is a good idea to think about putting together an advance care plan and making (or updating) your will.

Putting together an advance care plan will mean that if you become seriously ill, your family will be able to organise medical treatment for you that is in line with your wishes. An advance care plan outlines all of your preferences and instructions relating to your medical treatment. You can pass this information on to the staff at your residential aged care home.

Making a will ensures that your finances and matters relating to your estate are taken care of in the way you would like and that your family are not left with a confusing legal situation. Give the name of the executor of your will to your residential aged care home so they have it on hand if they need it. The executor can finalise any accounts and organise repayments to your estate.

For more information see the [Advance care plans](#) video.

### **Complaints**

The Australian Government Department of Social Services manage all complaints about residential aged care homes through the Aged Care Complaints Scheme. You can call them on 1800 550 552.

### **Where to get help**

- Your local doctor
- My Aged Care, call 1800 200 422
- **[Aged Care Assessment Services](#)**
- Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre, call 1800 052 222
- **[Carers Victoria](#)** , call 1800 242 636
- **[Seniors Information Victoria](#)**, call 1300 13 50 90
- **[Council on the Ageing Victoria](#)** , call (03) 9654 4443
- **[Aged Care Complaints Scheme](#)** , call 1800 550 552

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