



Navigating Caring at Home: 8 practical things it helps to know and where to find more information

When someone you love becomes seriously ill, you don't usually think of yourself as a "carer." You're a partner. A spouse. A child. A friend. And you're doing what needs to be done.

But suddenly, you're also managing medications, watching for changes, organising appointments, and trying to keep everything going, maybe while feeling overwhelmed yourself.

Inspired by one person's experience of caring for someone they love, these are eight practical things that may help you navigate this time, and where CareSearch including palliAGED, has resources to help.

1 You don't have to do this alone

People will often say, 'let me know if you need anything'.

Give yourself permission to take up the offer and be specific in what you need e.g. a meal, collecting a prescription, someone to sit with your loved one while you rest, or run an errand.



Navigate to: CareSearch '[Managing daily life](#)' page for advice on creating a system and network to assist with caring at home. You might also explore '[Looking after yourself](#)' page and palliAGED [Self-care form](#) to identify what care you might need in this journey.

2 Ask about costs early

Not everything may be covered by health funds or Medicare, and unexpected bills can arrive at the worst time.

When tests, treatments or medications are discussed, ask 'Will there be any out-of-pocket costs for this?'

Knowing up-front won't change anything, but it does help you plan.



Navigate to: CareSearch '[Cost of care](#)' page, offering information on financial services, including managing costs of medicines and travel costs incurred when travelling from regional areas.

3 Be ready for changes at home

Caring at home can change your day-to-day life more than you expect.

You might need space for equipment, easier access into the house, clothing for the person that is easy to slip on and off, and extra bedding for frequent changes.

Ask for advice on what to expect, if it doesn't feel workable raise concerns early.



Navigate to: CareSearch '[Setting up for at home palliative care](#)' page, includes download option for state based 'Palliative Caring' booklets and links for equipment

4 Write things down

You'll be given a lot of information, and it will be hard to remember everything.

Keep a notebook, or use a phone application, to note key information such as medication names, timings and doses, appointment times or questions you want to ask during appointments.



Navigate to: palliAGED '[fillable Medicines list](#)' to help you keep track of medications, dose and timings. The CareSearch '[Emergency Contact List](#)' can also be a useful resource for urgent queries.

5 Ask to be included in information and updates

You may be the person providing most of the care, but you won't automatically receive all of the information. You can ask to be included in conversations, receive appointment summaries and be part of discussions about care changes – often just needing consent from your loved one.



Navigate to: CareSearch '[Being part of the care team](#)' page, because your voice is important, particularly if you are recognising changes. It can be a good idea to make sure the person you care for has a [My Health Record](#). This keeps their health information in one place and lets doctors and other health professionals find it easily.

6 Expect things to change

Medications, symptoms and routines can change quickly.

You might feel like you've figured out routines and what works, then something shifts again. That's normal.

But if something feels uncertain or confusing, remember to ask for help – the health team can re-assess symptoms and function and suggest new strategies and medications.



Navigate to: CareSearch '[Symptoms and medicines](#)' and '[Managing symptoms](#)' pages, offer fact sheets on how to manage common changes and symptoms that can occur as a life-limiting condition progresses.

7 Have some basic first aid supplies

Having supplies on hand will help you feel more prepared in the case of a small skin tear or accident, such as a fall.

It can also help to ask visiting nurses, allied health or palliative care team on how to manage basic first aid and repositioning, and when to escalate concerns.



Navigate to: CareSearch [‘Practical Caring’](#) has information and links to palliAGED videos on basic care practices e.g. how to do a soft towel wash, and a Carers support kit.

8 This will affect you, and that’s to be expected

You may feel exhausted, frightened, angry, frustrated, or overwhelmed: maybe all these things at one time or another. You might not sleep properly, and you might always feel you are ‘on duty’. It’s important to understand these feelings are normal, and you don’t have to carry everything on your own.

If you can, talk to someone you trust, have your own health team in place to support your needs, and try to accept support even if it feels uncomfortable.



Navigate to: CareSearch [‘Support Groups’](#) page offers information for disease specific support groups, or the [State Resources](#), links through for contact details of state-based carer support organisations. Carer Gateway also has an [online carer community forum](#) or you can call [1800 422 737](#) to register and find a local support group or access counselling.

A final note from one carer to another

When caring for someone you love, take pride in what you are doing. You don’t have to do it “perfectly”, because offering comfort, safety and dignity and just being there, doing your best, is enough.