



karuna
dedicated holistic support

the kindest care

Care of the mind

Caring at home

Most people with a life-limiting illness want to spend as much time as possible in their own home because they are comforted by the familiarity of their surroundings and the presence of those they love.

Caring for a loved one can be very rewarding and something most family members want to do if they are able.

In providing care at home usually one family member or friend will assume primary responsibility for coordinating the various elements of care required.

Providing care can be a challenging experience because the physical and emotional demands are there 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

As the primary carer, you will manage the care of your loved one much better if you do not try to do everything yourself – this is an unrealistic expectation.

Drawing on both formal and informal supports will enable you to spend more quality time with your loved one and ensure you look after yourself too.

The length of time you will be providing care is uncertain and could extend over a long period of time. Care is sustainable when approached as a team effort involving family, friends and health care professionals.

Family care

First you need to work out what is going to be required in addition to your family's normal everyday activities. This will change as the illness progresses but generally includes attending medical appointments, ongoing communication with health care professionals including GP and medical specialists, medications, hygiene and personal care, meals, recreational activities and outings, social visits and communications. You will also need to learn new skills associated with providing physical care at home, what home nursing equipment is required and how to use it.

On top of all this it is important to make time for your relationship outside of giving care. Sometimes the caring role can dominate, leaving little room for what is really important for both you and your loved one. To help you find a balance many people in your position create a roster for family and friends to contribute. This not only helps you but gives them a caring role and gives your loved one a wider circle of love and support.

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Professional care

Ask your GP to advise you about the services that are available, how to access them and how to arrange an assessment if this is required. Services may include personal care, home help, home nursing and allied health care including counselling, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and dieticians.

Respite care

Respite can be provided by family and friends but it is also available through professional in-home respite services. Your GP or nursing service may also be able to arrange temporary placement in a residential facility when you need a break or the level of care required is more than what you can provide yourself at home.

Carers often find it difficult to leave the person in their care with someone else, especially with a stranger. To feel guilty is a very normal reaction, especially if the person you are caring for does not want you to leave them with someone else. It is normal for them to feel anxious, or even angry, and worried that the respite carer will not know what to do if you are not there.

However, your loved one may recognise your need for respite and not want to be a burden. Sometimes they even find that a new face, new conversation and different activities are a welcome break from their usual routine.

Financial assistance

You may find that becoming a full-time carer can create financial problems, especially if you have had to give up work or take unpaid leave. Some options for financial assistance may be through:

- Carer and Sickness benefits from Centrelink
- Superannuation
- Insurance
- Private Health Funds
- Community organisations (help with home nursing equipment, interest free loans etc)
- Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Workplace leave entitlements

Karuna also has experienced people you can talk with on:
07 3632 8300 or karuna@karuna.org.au



This is a **Support and Learning** resource. More resources available at www.karuna.org.au/resources. Karuna is affiliated with www.fpmt.org



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