

Providing personal care



The person you are caring for may, or may not, want to be bathed or showered each day, so ensure their preferences are heard and respected.

Bathing, showering and toileting

If you are caring for someone at home and providing personal care, you will understand how important it is for this to be done with respect and concern for their dignity. Showering and toileting someone who is unwell may be confronting for you as a carer, as well as the person you are caring for.

If either of you is finding this difficult, consider accepting help from friends and family members who may be willing to share these caring roles.

Lifting and moving

If the person you are caring for needs assistance to move around, make sure you are shown how to do this correctly and that you are provided with the correct equipment. This is important to make sure both of you avoid being injured, so look to your nurse for practical advice.

Mouth care

The person you are caring for needs to have their mouth cleaned at least once a day. If they cannot chew or swallow properly and small amounts of food are left in their mouth, this can lead to oral infections.

If a toothbrush works, choose a soft one. If not, offer mouth wash or oral swabs. Swabs, which have a soft foam or cotton heads on the end of a stick, can be purchased untreated or impregnated with a flavoured paste.

If they are not eating or drinking, use a moist swab to wet the lips and tongue every hour or two during the day and whenever you attend to them at night. Your nursing service may be able to provide mouth swabs to assist you. Lip balms can relieve uncomfortable, dry lips.

If a sore or dry mouth is causing discomfort, consult your pharmacist or visiting nurse for further advice.

Hair care

It is possible to wash a person's hair when they are confined to bed though it will be easier if someone can help you. Dry hair shampoo can make the job easier and it may be worth seeing if there is a mobile hairdressing service available in your area.

Nail care and grooming

Keep nails clean and trimmed. If toenails are hard and thickened you may need a podiatrist's assistance.

Try to maintain their normal personal grooming routine such as shaving or applying makeup.

Bed linen

If the person is confined to bed, change the sheets as often as required. Ask a nurse to show you how to change the sheets while the bed is occupied.

When changing the bed, you can reduce washing by placing the top sheet on the bottom of the bed and placing a clean sheet on top every day or two.



If you are caring for someone who is incontinent, use incontinence aids and a plastic sheet to protect the mattress. Make sure they are not lying directly on the plastic.

For longer term use, ask your visiting nursing service about how to access incontinence supplies such as pads at reduced cost through schemes such as CAPS or EnableNSW.

For more information about the **Continence Aids Payment Scheme (CAPS)**, visit:

health.gov.au/our-work/continence-aids-payment-scheme-caps

Find out about **EnableNSW** services:

enable.health.nsw.gov.au

Clothing

It is important for clothes to be comfortable and practical, as you need to be able to dress and undress them with ease.

Tracksuits or t-shirts made of soft, stretchy fabric are likely to be less restrictive than more formal, fitted clothing.

Aim to have them change out of pyjamas each day if it makes them feel fresher and they enjoy the normality of this routine.



Meals

Providing food is one of the ways we show love and concern. It is important to understand that nutritional needs of someone with a life-limiting illness will change over time, and their appetite will lessen as their illness progresses towards the end of life. They are likely to become more particular about their food, and to eat smaller portions or not want to eat at all. Try not to be disheartened if food is rejected. This is a common response and not necessarily an indication that the person you are caring for is being difficult.

There are no special rules or diets, so you can be guided by their personal preferences. Serve them what they want to eat, encouraging them to eat as much – or as little – as they like, whenever they want to.

- Offer a selection of small, nutritionally dense portions of food as often as desired during the day.
- Illness can dull the sense of taste. Different flavour combinations or using herbs and spices (if tolerated) may help.
- Cooking smells may be off-putting, so use the extractor fan or open windows to disperse odours.
- If they have a dry or sore mouth, they may prefer soft food. Try blending it or straining it through a sieve, keeping individual components of the meal separate. Food is likely to lose its appeal if everything is blended together.
- Ready-made or canned food like soups, yoghurts and custards are a nutritious option without being time-consuming to prepare.
- Soups and milky drinks are tasty and nutritious options for people who can only eat fluids.
- Supplements designed as meal replacements are sometimes more palatable if chilled.
- Fortifying food with dried milk, cream, ice cream, eggs, honey, and nutrition supplement powders can add nourishment.
- Referral to a dietician may be helpful if swallowing problems exist, or for advice about liquid replacements.

Useful contacts

Australian Indigenous Health InfoNet

- ☎ (08) 9370 6336
- 🖱 healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/learn/health-system/palliative-care

Cancer Council NSW

- ☎ 13 11 20
- 🖱 cancercouncil.com.au

Carer Gateway

- ☎ 1800 422 737
- 🖱 carergateway.gov.au

Carers NSW

- ☎ (02) 9280 4744
- 🖱 carersnsw.org.au

Caresearch

- ☎ (08) 7221 8233
- 🖱 caresearch.com.au

Centrelink

- ☎ 13 27 17
- 🖱 servicesaustralia.gov.au

Dementia Australia NSW

- ☎ 1800 100 500
- 🖱 dementia.org.au

GriefLine National

- ☎ 1300 845 745
- 🖱 griefline.org.au

Leukaemia Foundation

- ☎ 1800 620 420
- ✉ info@leukaemia.org.au
- 🖱 leukaemia.org.au

Lifeline

- ☎ 13 11 14
- 🖱 lifeline.org.au

My Aged Care

- ☎ 1800 200 422
 - 🖱 myagedcare.gov.au
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My Health Record

- ☎ 1800 723 471
- 🖱 myhealthrecord.gov.au

National Disability Insurance Service (NDIS)

- ☎ 1800 800 110
- 🖱 ndis.gov.au

National Stroke Foundation

- ☎ StrokeLine: 1800 787 653
- 🖱 strokefoundation.org.au

NSW Trustee & Guardian

- ☎ 1300 109 290
- 🖱 tag.nsw.gov.au

Palliative Care NSW

- ☎ (02) 8076 5600
- 🖱 palliativecarensw.org.au

Relationships Australia

- ☎ 1300 364 277
- 🖱 relationships.org.au

Services Australia

- ☎ servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/contact-us/phone-us
- 🖱 servicesaustralia.gov.au

The Department of Veteran's Affairs

- ☎ General enquiries: 1800 838 372
- ☎ Counselling Service: 1800 011 046
- 🖱 dva.gov.au

If you require an interpreter, contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)

- ☎ 13 14 50
- 🖱 tisnational.gov.au

If you have a hearing or speech impairment, contact the National Relay Service

- ☎ 24 hour relay call numbers
TTY/voice calls: 133 677
Speak and Listen: 1300 555 727
SMS Relay: 0423 677 767
- 🖱 relayservice.gov.au

Caring for someone as they approach the end of their life can be both rewarding and demanding. It is hoped that this book will help to explain what caring involves, so you are better equipped to make informed decisions which reflect your needs and circumstances.

You matter.



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