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## Factsheet 1: Tips for caring for someone at the end of life

We at CarerHelp recognise the needs of people caring for someone facing the end of life. You play an important role and at times it will be challenging. Here is some information that we hope can make the caring role easier for those living in country regions of Australia. Further general information can be found in the CarerHelp Information Pack or on the CarerHelp website.

### Travelling for health care

You may need to travel to regional or metropolitan hospitals for health care. It is important to frequently remind health professionals that you are from a rural area and need to travel a significant distance. Find out what options are available and ask for what you need to make things easier for yourself.

**"Travelling the 5 hours required planning. It was important to find accommodation suitable, affordable and close to the hospital."**

Some suggestions include:

- Can they schedule appointments together (to reduce the number of trips) or schedule appointments at certain times of the day (to make travel more convenient and avoid accommodation costs)? Peak-hour travel can be stressful, so you may like to avoid these times.
- Are there opportunities to reduce travel and use telehealth or is it possible to see your local GP instead (depending on the issue)? Specialists are often more than happy to have some of the appointments via telehealth after an initial face-to-face appointment.



- Is there someone who can assist with organising accommodation and travel, such as a hospital social worker or care coordinator? Alternatively you might like to use Medistays to find subsidised accommodation. Call 1300 085 036 or email [contact@medistays.com.au](mailto:contact@medistays.com.au).
- What financial assistance is available for travel and accommodation? Every state has a Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATs) as explained in the [National Rural Health Alliance factsheet](#). In all states and territories except Victoria, this service will bulk bill accommodation.
- If you are very rural or remote, the Flying Doctors Service may also be able to assist you with travel. Discuss this with your health provider.
- If you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, ask the hospital if there is an Aboriginal Hospital Liaison Officer who can greet you on arrival at the hospital.

**"We relied on our local GP in between visits to Melbourne. I made sure I had phone numbers for our Melbourne health professionals and made sure I had plenty of supplies before I left."**

### Look after yourself

Many country people pride themselves on their resilience and self-reliance. These are such great traits, but in a long-term or intense caring situation, they can lead to carer burnout, distress and physical illness.

You play such an essential role in looking after your friend or family member. You need to ensure you stay well to continue providing that level of care. It is important to ask for and accept help from others and also let people know if you are finding aspects of caring difficult. Health professionals are there to support you and the person you are caring for. Your general practitioner is a good initial person to talk to if things are becoming very difficult for you.

Check out our [Tips For Staying Well factsheet](#).



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### Important conversations and planning ahead

It is important for anyone facing the end of life to consider some big questions and plan ahead. It is even more important to plan ahead if you are residing in a rural area. You may find it challenging to talk about end of life choices but things always run more smoothly if you have thought about them ahead of time and made a plan of action.

It may be helpful to talk to the person you are caring for about:

- What is most important to them? This will inform their care at the end of life, including where they would like to be when they die.
- If you have to travel suddenly for health care or for an emergency, who will look after other family members/pets/farm?
- If there is an emergency, would they want to be transported to a hospital, or remain at home?

**"I had to really advocate for him by showing them his Advanced Care Directive and telling them to stop with all the tests and extra medicines."**





### Top tips

1. Look for services in your area. Check out our [Finding Services to Support You](#) factsheet.
  2. Where possible, make health care appointments so they are convenient for you.
  3. Get signed up early (My Aged Care, Carer Gateway, Government financial assistance, NDIS).
  4. Ask for and accept help from friends and neighbours. Check out our [Community Supports](#) factsheet.
  5. Stay connected (helplines, online support, local supports). Check out our [Helplines for Carers](#) factsheet.
  6. Seek information online on the [CarerHelp website](#).
  7. Look after yourself by going to your regular health appointments, taking breaks, and catching up with a friend.
  8. Express your cultural, spiritual and individual needs (you are unique, and so are your needs).
  9. Have important conversations with the person you are caring for and consider an Advance Care Plan or Advance Care Directive. Check out our [Important Conversations](#) factsheet.
  10. Develop a list of contacts which includes phone numbers in case of an emergency.
- “Pack a hospital bag just in case and leave it near the front door. Pyjamas, toiletries, medical history and medicines list (and medicines), advanced care plan, and personal mementos.”**