



FREE GUIDE

Carer wellbeing

Who to call, what's free, how to plan a break and what payments you might be entitled to.

If you care for someone, you've heard 'look after yourself' more times than you can count. This guide is about the how: the free services built for carers, how to plan a break before you need one, and the payments worth checking. Every number here was checked on the official government website.

Step 1: Call Carer Gateway

Carer Gateway is an Australian Government program providing free services and support for carers. Call 1800 422 737, Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm, to find out what you're eligible for. Services are available in person, over the phone or online, and include:

- tailored support packages
- counselling for carers
- coaching and online carer skills courses
- peer support groups, where you can talk with other carers
- planned and emergency respite
- help to make an emergency care plan.

There's an eligibility checker on carergateway.gov.au if you'd like to check before you call.

Step 2: Talk to someone

If you feel stressed, sad or frustrated, it may help to talk to a counsellor. Carer Gateway offers free counselling for carers in three ways:

- **In-person, one-on-one:** up to six sessions with a professional counsellor experienced in supporting carers. Call 1800 422 737 and choose option 1.
- **In-person group counselling,** led by a professional counsellor, if it suits you.
- **Phone counselling:** call 1800 422 737 and choose option 2. This service is for carers over 18.

If you're distressed and need help now, call Lifeline on 13 11 14 (24 hours). Young people aged 5 to 25 can call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800.

Step 3: Plan a break before you need one

Respite is when someone else takes care of the person you care for, so you can have a break. Carer Gateway puts it simply: a break gives you time to do everyday things, relax, deal with stress and look after yourself.

Planned respite: as part of a tailored support package, you may be able to get free planned respite, where a service provider steps in while you take a break.

Emergency respite: if you become sick or injured and can't keep caring, call Carer Gateway on 1800 422 737 at any time. Your local Carer Gateway service provider will talk through the options and book emergency respite where a suitable service is available.

If the person you care for is older and gets Support at Home through My Aged Care, respite care is one of the services that program can include.

Make an emergency care plan now, while things are calm. Write down the person's needs, medicines, routines and key contacts, so someone else can step in.

Step 4: Check what payments you can get

Services Australia has two main payments for carers. You may be able to get both, and you can make one combined claim.

- **Carer Payment** is for people who give constant care to someone with disability or a medical condition, or an adult who's frail aged. The person needs care for at least 6 months, or is at the end of their life. The amount depends on your circumstances, including income. It's usually paid from the date you lodge your claim, so don't wait.
- **Carer Allowance** is a fortnightly supplementary payment if you care for someone who needs daily support. The person needs ongoing daily care for at least 12 months, or has a terminal medical condition. In October 2026 it was \$162.60 a fortnight.

Both you and the person you care for need to meet the rules. Check the Services Australia pages, or call Carer Gateway, before you claim.

Carer Payment (Services Australia): www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/carers-payment

Carer Allowance (Services Australia): www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/carers-allowance



Small things that help

None of this replaces real support. It just makes the week a little easier to carry.

- Book your own GP check-up. Carers often go last.
- When someone offers help, give them one specific job.
- Keep a one-page summary of the person's needs and contacts. It doubles as your emergency care plan.
- Write down two people who could step in if you're sick.
- Try a Carer Gateway peer support group, even once.
- Notice the warning signs: not sleeping, snapping, feeling hopeless. Tell your GP or call Carer Gateway counselling.

Your carer checklist

- ☐ Call Carer Gateway on 1800 422 737, or use the online eligibility checker.
- ☐ Ask about a tailored support package.
- ☐ Book a counselling session if you'd like one.
- ☐ Write an emergency care plan.
- ☐ Save Carer Gateway's number for emergency respite.
- ☐ Check Carer Payment and Carer Allowance with Services Australia.
- ☐ Book your own GP check-up.
- ☐ Try a carer peer support group.
- ☐ Save Lifeline (13 11 14) in your phone.
- ☐ Write down two people who could step in if you're sick.

Questions people ask

What is Carer Gateway?

Carer Gateway is an Australian Government program providing free services and support for carers, including counselling, coaching, peer support, skills courses, tailored support packages and respite. Call 1800 422 737, Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm.

How do I get emergency respite?

If you become sick or injured and can't keep caring, call Carer Gateway on 1800 422 737 at any time. Your local Carer Gateway service provider will talk through the options and book emergency respite where a suitable service is available.



Can I get free counselling as a carer?

Yes. Carer Gateway offers free in-person one-on-one counselling (up to six sessions), group counselling and phone counselling for carers. Call 1800 422 737. The phone counselling service is for carers over 18.

What's the difference between Carer Payment and Carer Allowance?

Carer Payment is a payment for people who give constant care, and the amount depends on your circumstances. Carer Allowance is a fortnightly supplementary payment for people who care for someone needing daily support. You may be able to get both.

How much is Carer Allowance?

Services Australia listed Carer Allowance at \$162.60 a fortnight in October 2026. Rates change, so check the Services Australia website for the current amount.

What is an emergency care plan?

It's a written plan so someone else can step in if you can't provide care: the person's needs, medicines, routines and key contacts. Carer Gateway has a guide to making one.

How can Kinship help a carer?

Kinship supports the person you care for, with the same support worker every visit and carer updates as standard. That includes NDIS daily living and community participation, CHSP domestic assistance in Northern Sydney and the Southern Highlands, and private cleaning, reorganising and nursing.

Talk to a real person. Call Kinship Uniting Services on **0437 733 744** or email info@kinshipunitingservices.com. Deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment? Contact us through the National Relay Service: Speak & Listen 1300 555 727, TTY 133 677, SMS relay 0423 677 767.

Sources

Carer Gateway: home and contact details — <https://www.carergateway.gov.au/>

Carer Gateway: Planned and emergency respite —

<https://www.carergateway.gov.au/help-and-support/caring-me/available-support-carers/planned-emergency-respite>

Carer Gateway: Counselling for carers —

<https://www.carergateway.gov.au/help-and-support/caring-me/talk-and-connect/counselling-carers>

Services Australia: Carer Payment — <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/carers-payment>

Services Australia: Carer Allowance — <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/carers-allowance>

My Aged Care: Support at Home program — <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/support-at-home>