

# Sensitive content

Dementia Australia warns that the next section may be challenging or upsetting for some readers.

We provide this information to help you discuss and plan your future care needs with family and carers while you can still do so.



## Section 8 Residential care

This publication contains information and general advice. It should not substitute personalised advice from a qualified professional.

While we strive to keep content accurate and up-to-date, information can change over time. For updates, please visit [dementia.org.au](https://dementia.org.au) or call the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**.

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[dementia.org.au/resources/the-dementia-guide](https://dementia.org.au/resources/the-dementia-guide)

## Section 8

# Residential care

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Exploring residential care options can be difficult for everybody involved. You should be involved in discussions and decision-making, as much as possible.

We recommend early planning for future residential care. You can make your wishes known before your dementia progresses.

You may wish to help select the facility, so when the time comes you feel more familiar and comfortable.

## Identifying the right time

If residential care is an option, it can be hard to know when it is the right time to move.

You may still be living independently in many ways. But there may also be times when your dementia puts your wellbeing at risk.

Every situation is different. To decide what is right for you, consider the following questions.

- Do you feel safe at home?
- Is memory loss, confusion or disorientation causing you problems?
- Has your mobility or coordination become limited?
- Do you need ongoing supervision to do things?
- Do you have needs that your carer, family or support services cannot provide?

If so, it may be time to consider moving to residential care.

It is possible you may not realise you need additional care and support. It is important to be guided by the people who you trust, such as your carers, family members or health professionals.

## Choosing a residential care facility

Looking into residential care options can bring up many emotions. You may feel stress, sadness, relief, loneliness or guilt.

Sometimes families disagree or have concerns about the quality of care available.

It is important to discuss your changing needs with your doctor, carer or family member to ensure you receive the best care. Dementia Australia also offers advisory and counselling services that can help during this time.

## Weighing up your options

When considering your options, it is a good idea to visit at least three aged care facilities. You can consider how they will meet your needs as your condition progresses.

Take a checklist that includes the things that are important to you and your family and friends. Your checklist might include some of the following things.

### **Activities and services**

- Accessibility by public transport and car.
- Appropriate social and recreational activities.
- Outings and special events.
- Provision of extra services, such as hairdressing, podiatry and dental.
- Vacancies and waiting lists.

### **Care and medical support**

- Welcoming and informative staff.
- Positive staff interactions with residents and family.
- Care staff with appropriate dementia training.
- Provision of appropriate medical care.
- Appropriate overnight staffing levels.
- Option to keep your existing doctor.

### **Comfort**

- A clean and homely environment.
- Respect for privacy and personal space.

- Comfortable bedrooms with personal belongings.
- Pets are welcome to visit.
- Ambiance of communal areas and garden.
- A dementia-friendly environment, e.g. clear signs and paths to the toilets.
- Good-quality, varied meals served in suitable dining facilities.
- Consultation on food preferences and dietary requirements.
- Respect for cultural and spiritual beliefs and emotional needs.

### **Family support**

- Close location to family and friends.
- Families are welcome to stay for meals.
- Option for family and friends to continue playing a caring role.
- Flexible visiting hours.
- A committee for residents and relatives.



## Trialling residential respite care

Before making a decision, you can try one or more short stays in a residential respite care facility.

This will give you a chance to become familiar with the facility. This may make the eventual transition into full-time care easier.

It will also give your carer a break. Regular respite might help them continue caring for you at home longer.

## Understanding fees and costs

The Australian Government funds some of the costs of residential aged care facilities. But you may also have to make a financial contribution.

If you are over 65, your My Aged Care funding will depend on your financial circumstances and can vary between facilities.

Aged care fees may include:

- a basic daily fee
- a means-tested care fee
- an accommodation payment
- fees for extra or optional services.

Fees are based on an assessment of your income and assets by Centrelink or the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

My Aged Care provides information on organising residential care. They can help you estimate bonds and fees using a Residential Care Fee Estimator.

You can also get advice from a financial specialist in aged care or an accountant.

To learn more about eligibility, fees and costs for residential aged care funding through My Aged Care, visit [myagedcare.gov.au](https://myagedcare.gov.au)

## Getting financial assistance

### For people aged 65 years and over

If you are aged 65 years and over, you could receive financial assistance to enter a government-funded residential care facility.

You will need to have an Aged Care Assessment (ACAS) first. This assessment is free of charge. It is usually conducted in your home (or hospital). You can involve family members, carers or close friends.

The assessment will:

- determine the level of care you need
- recommend appropriate types of residential care
- provide details of suitable facilities
- provide a written statement of eligibility to show residential care facilities.

Your doctor can refer you for an assessment. You can also request an assessment by calling My Aged Care on **1800 200 422**.

Private residential care services are also available. These do not require an Aged Care Assessment.

## **For people with younger onset dementia**

If you are living with younger onset dementia and would like to be assessed for funding to live in a residential care environment, you will need to refer to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). You can find out if funding is available for you to move out of home and into a group care environment.

Private residential care services are also available and do not require an assessment.

## **Making the move**

### **Applying to facilities**

You can apply to many facilities at the same time. All applications are private.

Ask to be placed on a waiting list. This will give you extra time to consider if it is the right time to move.

Stay in regular contact with the facility while you are on the waiting list. This will let them know you are still interested. And if you need to move urgently, let the facility know.

### Receiving an offer

When a place becomes available, they will contact you to see if you are still interested and when you can move in. Things can move quickly, so you need to be ready. Generally, you will have seven days to move in.

Charges may apply from the date of your acceptance, including those required by the Australian government.

The facility will provide you with a Resident Agreement. This outlines the services, fees, rights and responsibilities. Make sure you understand everything before signing the agreement.

Moving into one care facility doesn't mean you have to stay there forever. It is possible to move from one facility to another.

## Getting familiar

The care staff at your chosen facility will gather information about who you are before you move in. This information might include your:

- personal preferences
- interests
- life and family history
- medical conditions
- food likes and dislikes
- social and activity preferences.

The staff will then draft a care plan for you. Let them get to know you as much as possible. This will help them provide the best care.

## Settling into your new home

Moving into a new home is never easy. When you move into a facility, think about:

- putting labels on all personal belongings. This will help you know what items belong to you, as well as find any that go missing

- choosing personal items and furniture to go into your room. This adds familiar touches to make your room feel more like home
- having a pharmacist or doctor review all medications and give these details to the staff.

## Managing visits from family and friends

Seeing your family and friends can bring up a range of emotions. As your dementia progresses, it can become even more difficult.

But there are things you can all do to make visits meaningful and enjoyable.

### **Things your friends and family might like to do when they visit**

- Get to know the care staff by name. They can introduce themselves or follow a regular ritual for visits.
- Bring a magazine or newspaper with them. They can read out interesting articles or do a quiz with you.

- Bring old photos or postcards to help stimulate memories.
- Write a letter with you to your mutual friends or family. This can help nourish and maintain your relationships.
- Use hugs, neck massages and handholding to replace or complement conversation.
- Make a life book. This is a wonderful way of validating your life journey and remembering accomplishments.
- Request a private space during visits to let you be more intimate.
- If allowed by the facility, bring an animal or your pet with them.
- Bring a supportive friend with them for moral support.

If a visit does not go as planned, do not worry. We all have high and low energy days, and you or your friend or family member may have felt tired that day.

It is still important for you to spend time together. No matter what that looks like.



### Keeping in touch

Transitioning into care can be challenging and confusing for all involved. Remember, it takes time to settle into a new environment. Your friends and family will also have to deal with the change on a practical and emotional level.

Encourage your friends and family to stay in touch by sending you cards and notes. Every time you look at the card, you will feel their support.

### Protecting your quality of care

If you, your family or friends are concerned about the care you are receiving, let your facility manager know immediately.

You can also contact:

- the Older Persons Advocacy Network on **1800 700 600**
- the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission on **1800 951 822** or at **[agedcarequality.gov.au](https://agedcarequality.gov.au)**

You can complain by calling **1800 550 552** or by visiting **[agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint](https://agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint)**