



# palliAGED Practice Tips for Careworkers in Aged Care

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**Care Provider  
Issues**



## Tips for Careworkers: Aged Care Access and Assessment

**What it is:** The aged care system provides support for older Australians living in their own home or residential aged care. Access to government-funded aged care starts with an assessment of the person's needs. The older person is asked questions about what they would like help with to keep them as independent as possible, safe, and connected with their community. This is used to recommend the type and level of care that will best meet their needs.

**Why it matters:** Sometimes care decisions and what care people expect can be a source of worry for the person. It might also result in arguments in the family or with care providers. Understanding how access to aged care works means that you can better support people to receive the care they need. It can also help to manage what they expect of you.

**What I need to know:** Aged care assessment has a focus on client needs. It also aims to support wellness and reablement where appropriate. The amount of funding provided depends on the level of care approved. This will affect the type and amount of care provided.

After approval and allocation of funds, the aim is to arrange services according to the person's needs and what is important to them.

My Aged Care is there to answer any questions relating to assessment or eligibility for government-funded services.

An older person or their representative can register with MyAgedCare for an assessment, or they can be referred by a health professional. Assessment can take place at the older person's home, or in a hospital. There is a process in place for review of the assessment outcome if requested.

If you care for a client who requires more support than their current package allows, they can apply through My Aged Care to be reassessed. Speak with your supervisor if you notice an increased need for care.

### Note

If clients or families have any questions about access to aged care, refer them to your supervisor and/or the My Aged Care Contact Centre at [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au)

Anyone with consent can register an older person with the My Aged Care Contact Centre for screening. They can also be referred from a hospital, or by a GP or other health professional with patient consent.

### Do

Visit the palliAGED 'For Community' section for information on access to aged care for older Australians [www.palliAGED.com.au](http://www.palliAGED.com.au)

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## My reflections:

How can aged care assessment help an older person?

## My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice  
Tip Sheets:  
Advance Care Planning  
Frailty  
Palliative Care

For references and the latest version of all Tip Sheets visit  
[www.palliaged.com.au/PracticeTipSheets](http://www.palliaged.com.au/PracticeTipSheets)

# Tips for Careworkers: Palliative Care



**What it is:** Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of people and their family and carers who are facing concerns associated with a life-limiting illness. This means that the person is expected to die in the foreseeable future and before they would have without the condition. This can be true for people at any age including older people.

**Why it matters:** The number of older people requiring palliative care is increasing in Australia. Careworkers in aged care often spend a lot of time with older people and may learn of their likes, concerns, and experiences. They have an important role in caring for the person and reporting this information to nurses/supervisors.

**What I need to know:** Dementia, cancer, and advanced heart and lung disease are all examples of life-limiting chronic conditions.

Palliative care provides pain relief and manages symptoms as well as providing spiritual, emotional, and social support. The timing of the start of palliative care depends on the individual and the condition. Care plans may change.

Older people coming to the end of their life without illness can also benefit from a palliative approach to care. Common care issues in people needing palliative care include:

- pain
- dyspnoea (breathing difficulty)
- dysphagia (difficulty with swallowing)
- constipation/incontinence (bowel management)
- anxiety
- dry mouth
- fatigue (tiredness)
- depression.

**Note** As a person's needs change, palliative care helps with care planning, declining health, dying, and bereavement.

**Note** Some common signs that may indicate things are changing and palliative care needed are:

- less interest in doing things they enjoyed before
- changes in how they act and talk
- less interest in food and eating
- weight loss
- not as physically active as previously
- getting slower and less mobile
- difficulty with toileting
- problems swallowing.

**Do** Report what the person enjoys and what gives them satisfaction; recognise what they do well and 'what works'.

**Do** Let nursing/supervisory staff know if you notice any signs that a person may need palliative care.

**Do** Ask nursing/supervisory staff about SPICT4ALL, a tool to identify when a person's health is declining.

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## My reflections:

What are some of the illnesses an older person might have that suggest a need for palliative care?

Why is palliative care important?

What do I do to communicate with older people in my care?

## My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice  
Tip Sheets:  
Advance Care Planning  
End-of-Life Care Pathways  
Pain Management

For references and the latest version of all Tip Sheets visit  
[www.palliaged.com.au/PracticeTipSheets](http://www.palliaged.com.au/PracticeTipSheets)



## Tips for Careworkers: Self-Care

**What it is:** Self-care is a range of information, skills, and attitudes that careworkers can use to maintain mental and physical wellbeing.

Self-care can include understanding your strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivation, and emotions. In palliative care, self-care can also include grief and bereavement support, and understanding how to recognise and prevent burnout.

**Why it matters:** Caring for others can be rewarding. However, staff working in aged care look after many people who die. As a result, they may experience repeated grief.

Grief over the death of residents or clients is not unusual and may contribute to stress or burnout. Self-care is important to maintain balance in life.

**What I need to know:** It is helpful to be a member of a team that provides support, reflection, and debriefing. A team may be your work colleagues or a network of people outside of work.

Team meetings, debriefing or regular supervision can provide support.

**Do** Report to nursing/supervisory staff if you see signs that suggest a person is not coping. These can include:

- physical and emotional exhaustion
- poor sleep
- headaches
- negativity or feeling useless
- lack of enjoyment
- not working effectively
- absence from work.

**Do** Acknowledge your grief and recognise that it is a normal reaction to loss.

**Do** Talk to your supervisor and colleagues about what you are experiencing and request their help or support from a professional counsellor if needed.

**Do** Develop a self-care plan and strategies that promote your physical and emotional wellbeing. Self-care strategies may be different for everyone; select ones that work for you.

**Do** Visit the ELDAC Self-care room.

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## My reflections:

What support does my organisation provide for self-care?

Have I created a self-care plan and, if so, does it need to be reviewed?

## My notes:

See related palliAGED Practice  
Tip Sheets:  
Grief and Loss among Staff  
Talking Within the  
Aged Care Team

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