

# CARERS WHO HAVE DEPRESSION



While caring for a family member or friend who has a disability or illness can be a rewarding and positive experience, the ongoing stress can lead to depression.

When a caring role continues for many years, or is relentless and demanding, this can be exhausting, unpredictable, and frustrating. When the role is physically or emotionally challenging, the prolonged stress can result in depression.

Most people will feel sad or blue at different times of their life, but if these symptoms are ongoing and begin to interfere with daily activities, it is important to seek medical help.

Too often, carers are so busy caring for someone else that they neglect their own needs. But the sooner you seek medical attention, the sooner you can start a treatment plan towards better health. This can then lead to better resilience and capacity to cope with the demands of caring.

It is important to know that you are not alone and that help is available.

## GET HELP

Talk to your GP for an assessment of your symptoms. Your GP will be able to confirm a diagnosis and help you to explore the supports and treatments that are available.

Types of treatment may include psychological interventions ('talking' therapies, counselling) and medical intervention (antidepressant drugs).

## SUPPORT FOR YOU AS A CARER

Caring can be difficult at the best of times; it can feel almost impossible if you are experiencing your own health issues.

To help you last the distance, make sure you access all the support that is available to you.

Contact the [Carer Advisory Line 1800 514 845](tel:1800514845) for advice and information about practical, financial and emotional supports that are available to you as a carer.

## QUICK TIPS

When you are caring for someone else you often put your own needs last. These tips are a reminder that your own health and wellbeing is important. Staying strong will help you to better cope with the demands of caring.

- **Eat well** - A nutritious balanced diet will give you the fuel your body needs to keep on caring.
- **Exercise regularly** - Physical exercise can relieve tension and reduce stress levels.
- **Sleep well** - Caring can be exhausting so try and get eight hours sleep every night.
- **Share the care** - Let family members and friends know that their help and support is welcome.
- **Talk it over** - With a friend or family member or with a professional counsellor. Join a Carer Support Group and meet other people to share tips and experiences.
- **Take a break** - Do something that you love... or do nothing but relax and recharge your batteries.

Contact the [Carer Advisory Line for more information 1800 514 845](tel:1800514845).

Research suggests more than half of Australia's carers (56%) have at least moderate depression - a fifth of them have severe depression.<sup>1</sup>

1. Cummins, Robert A (2007) *The Wellbeing of Australians – Carer Health and Wellbeing*. Deakin University, Geelong.