



Where is my nearest Carer Support Group?

Contact **Carers NSW** on **1800 242 636** for details of your local carer support group or to request a printed listing of support groups in your region.

Contact the **Commonwealth Carelink and Carer Respite Centre** on **1800 059 059** for details of any additional carer support groups that they may support. They will also help you organise respite care and transport if required, so you can attend.

Alternatively, contact the association that supports the person you care for, ie Stroke Recovery Association, Autism Association, Mental Health Association etc, as they can also give you details of their carer support groups

A fact sheet for Carers:



Carer support groups



Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care

Caring for a family member, relative or friend can be both rewarding and demanding at the same time. As a carer, you have different needs from those of the person you are caring for. You may find that many of your friends, family and the professionals you encounter do not truly understand your situation, although they are well-meaning and want to give 'helpful advice'.

Carer support groups are one of the few carer-specific services available. Carers often nominate them as the best type of help. They provide a way for you to meet people who are like yourself, and understand what it is like being a carer. Talking to other carers often helps you to recognise that your needs are just as valid and learn some practical ideas to help in your caring role.

What are the benefits of attending a Carer Support Group?

A carer support group is a group of carers who meet on a regular basis to discuss their caring situation, and have some 'time out' from caring. It provides you the opportunity to:

get information

Going to a carer support group helps to keep you up-to-date with entitlements, services and information for carers. They may also arrange guest speakers on topics of interest or know where to get information. It is a particularly important source of information for carers from non-English speaking backgrounds.

get practical ideas

You may experience some practical problems in your carer role, and find that others (including the professionals) do not know how to help you. You may also experience emotions such as sadness, depression, guilt, exhaustion, frustration, anger, irritability and feel that you should not express them. Carer support groups allow you to talk them over and learn about how other carers deal with practical and emotional issues.

be with people who understand the impacts of caring

Caring can be a very isolating experience, it is important that you do not feel alone. By talking to these carers, you will find that you're not the only one feeling the way you do and this can be quite a relief.

meet new people

You may need to change your daily routines and learn new skills for your caring role. Your friends and family may not understand the changes in your life. Carer support groups allow you to meet new people with experience, skills and different ideas. You may even make some friends along the way.

Are there different types of support groups?

Yes, there are different types of carer support groups to meet the needs of different carers.

✓ Condition specific or general

Some groups are specifically for carers who are caring for someone with a certain condition, such as dementia or mental illness, others are for parents of children with a disability; however, many are open groups for carers with different caring circumstances.

✓ Cultural and language specific

Some councils, health centres, neighbourhood centres, and specialist organisations run multicultural and language specific support groups for carers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

✓ Face-to-face or over the phone

Some support groups are conducted over the telephone. They are particularly suitable for carers who cannot physically attend a group due to time or location. They are also very useful for linking carers from the same cultural backgrounds who are widely spread across NSW.

What else do I need to know about Carer Support Groups?

✓ Frequency, day/times and location of meeting

Most groups meet once a month for a couple of hours and usually at the same location. Some groups meet more frequently, and some groups do vary the days, the times and, in rural areas, the location.

✓ Transport, respite and other support

You can contact the carer support group coordinator or the Commonwealth Carer Respite Centre on 1800 059 059 to discuss about your transport and respite options.

✓ Confidentiality

Carer Support groups respect confidentiality and discussion of personal situations must not be discussed with others outside the group.

✓ Cost

The groups are free, although some ask for a small contribution for refreshments.

Keep in mind that support groups are like any other type of group; it may take a few sessions before you feel that you 'belong'. If you don't feel happy in a particular group, you can always try a different one.