



Australian Government

Cancer Australia

National Centre for

Gynaecological Cancers

# NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GYNAECOLOGICAL CANCERS

## Practical and financial support

### Where can I get support?

There might be times when you need help to do all the things you would usually do in your home. This might happen when you are recovering from surgery or treatment, or if the cancer progresses. It can be difficult to accept the loss of some of your independence and have people look after you, but accepting help can allow you to conserve your energy for things that are really important to you.

Your family, partner, friends or neighbours might be able to give practical support. Although it is sometimes difficult to accept this support, remember that others might feel good if they can help.

As well as practical support from family, friends, partners or neighbours, outside help is available. Accepting outside help can put less strain on family and friends and allow you to spend more pleasurable time with those close to you. Remember, the sooner you ask for help for whatever type of care, the easier and quicker it will be to organise and receive it.

### What types of support services are available?

Support services can cover a number of areas – from accommodation while undergoing treatment, to assistance with a wig for hair loss during chemotherapy and practical help around the home.

The social worker, discharge planner or community liaison nurse in the hospital or your GP will assess your need for care at home. They can inform you about the support services

available in your area and make the necessary arrangements for your care at home.

### What types of services are available in my home?

A number of different people and organisations provide services to help women in their own homes. The support services available to you will depend on the state or territory and the region or town in which you live. You will need to check what is available in your local area.

The people involved in your care and types of services which might be available to you include:

- Your **general practitioner** might be responsible for your care once you have left hospital.

In this factsheet:

Where can I get support?	1
What types of support services are available?	1
What types of services are available in my home?	1
What services are available to provide care?	2
Financial support	3
Accommodation and travel assistance	3
Program of Aids for Disabled People (PADP)	3
More information	3
Sources	3

- **Community nurses** offer a variety of practical services, which may include assistance with bathing, changing dressings, giving medication and providing support to you and your carers.
- **Occupational therapists** can help in providing practical aids to assist your self-care. They can also arrange for minor changes to your home, such as the fixing of handrails in bathrooms. If you are having difficulty dressing they may be able to suggest and arrange alterations to clothing.
- **Physiotherapists** can help you keep mobile and help you with pain relief, specific treatments, massage and exercise programs.
- **Palliative care teams** might involve a palliative care consultant, a palliative care nurse, a counsellor or social worker and palliative care volunteers. The teams work with your specialist, GP and community nurse to help you with control of pain and other symptoms and give emotional support to you and your family or carers.
- **Private nursing agencies** can provide services extra to those of the community nurse. The time required can be negotiated with the nursing service and the cost will vary according to the type of care and the number of hours required. Some nursing services offer care 24 hours a day. If you have private health insurance you should check to see if this service is covered.
- **Home care service/domiciliary care services** can provide practical help in your home. They can provide services such as respite, basic domestic help and personal care; essential home and yard upkeep are sometimes available. You could be placed on a waiting list. The greater your need, the sooner you will receive help. The cost of the service is adjusted according to your ability to pay.
- **Private home care services** are also available, providing assistance with shopping, washing and cleaning. Charges apply.

- **Meals on Wheels** will deliver meals on weekdays to housebound people for a minimal charge. You can contact them directly, but you need a referral from your GP, social worker or community nurse.
- **Church or other religious groups** might offer support to their members, such as going shopping for you. Contact your local church to find out if any such help is available.
- **Volunteer respite carers** can come and visit you for a set time each week or fortnight to give your carer a break. They may visit for between half an hour to a few hours to chat, help with letter-writing, phone calls, reading or just to be there. Your local community or neighbourhood centre can give you information about these services.

### What services are available to provide care?

If your illness progresses, you might need to be looked after outside your home, such as in a hospital, palliative care unit or hospice, or you might go into respite care for a short period in order to give your carers a break. For more information on palliative care see our [Palliative care](#) factsheet.

There are a number of services available to give you care outside your home:

- **Day centres**, often attached to nursing homes, hospitals or hospices, offer specialist care in nursing, leisure activities, symptom control, counselling and an opportunity for social interaction. Open during the day, they often provide a transport service.
- **Nursing homes** can offer short-term accommodation, and sometimes long-stay care, to give your carers a break. Nursing homes will charge a fee.
- **Hospitals**, both public and private, have beds available for short or long-term care. Access to public hospitals will depend on beds being available at the time and your level of need.

Ask your doctor or community nurse about these services.

## Financial support

Having cancer might have an impact on your financial situation. You might need to give up work, your partner might need to take time off to care for you and there might be additional costs such as medications, extra support services, travel and accommodation.

During an illness, you may find it hard to find the time or energy to review your options. Yet it's important to keep your family financially healthy.

## Accommodation and travel assistance

State and territory health departments have travel and accommodation schemes for people from rural and regional areas who need to travel to receive treatment. For more information contact your state or territory health department.

## Program of Aids for Disabled People (PADP)

These programs are state-based and provide equipment and aids to help people live independently. Equipment such as wheelchairs, shower chairs and wigs for those women suffering hair loss from chemotherapy might be provided.

PADP provides the equipment on indefinite loan for as long as it is needed, except for personal use items such as wigs, which are not required to be returned. You will need to get a letter from your doctor and your needs will be assessed by a health professional, such as an occupational therapist.

Your local hospital or community nurse will be able to tell you about other schemes that are available or places where you can get equipment cheaply.

## More information

To find out about where to go for financial assistance or practical help, start by asking your hospital or community social worker or your community nurse about benefits for which you might be eligible. He or she can also help you in claiming them.

Other sources of information include:

- The Cancer Council Helpline (13 11 20).
- Some local councils can help with practical matters, such as child care, meals and general home help.
- Centrelink is a useful source of information about your financial entitlements. Phone 13 27 17 or visit the Centrelink website at [www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)
- The Cancer Council Australia website has a 'Patient support' section that lists services in your local area. Go to [www.cancer.org.au](http://www.cancer.org.au)

## Sources

We thank the National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre ([www.nbocc.org.au](http://www.nbocc.org.au)) for allowing their information to be used for this factsheet.

## NATIONAL CENTRE FOR GYNAECOLOGICAL CANCERS

### CANCER AUSTRALIA

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**The National Centre for Gynaecological Cancers is an Australian Government initiative to improve outcomes for women affected by gynaecological cancers, their families and carers, and to lessen the impact of cancer on their lives. It has been established by Cancer Australia.**

### Practical and financial support 2010

Last updated 2009. The information in this fact sheet was current at the time of publication. To check if it is the most up-to date version, please call 02 6217 9818

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