



## Pharmacy Self Care Health Facts Column

By John Bell - 22 October 2008

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### ***Anyone, anytime can be a carer***

We are all affected by sickness and ill health. For most of us this will simply mean a few days off work from time to time.

Generally, if we suffer an accident or injury then we might be out of action for some weeks or even months; but usually a full and complete recovery follows.

However for some people chronic, in other words long term, illness or disability is an everyday part of life. For these people constant care is also necessary. In fact surveys show that, in Australia, one in five households has a carer – a relative or friend who takes on the responsibility of looking after someone who is frail, aged, chronically ill, injured or who has a disability.

Of course always feeling sick or being dependent on others is often a depressing and frustrating experience; but being a carer can also be extremely challenging – emotionally, physically and even financially.

So carers need care as well.

To help meet this need the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, with assistance from Centrelink and the Carers Association, has developed an electronic “Fact Card” titled *Carer Support*. It’s available from all those pharmacies throughout Australia which provide the Self Care Health Information.

If you spend a fair amount of your time helping someone else then you will most certainly want to know what support systems are available to help you.

For instance, the Carers Association is a support service for people who are looking after others. Carers Associations exist in every state and territory of Australia.

1800 242 636 is the national freecall number to call to find out more about how your local Carers Association can help you; or visit the Carers Australia website: [www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au)

When you need a break from caring, the Carer Respite Centres can help. These centres can assist in arranging for someone to take over your caring duties for a short term period, or even in an emergency or unplanned situation.

Financial help for carers is also available. The Commonwealth Government provides assistance with both so-called Carer Payment and Carer Allowance. You don’t have to live with, or even nearby, the person being cared for, but you must be providing constant care. Carer Payment is paid at the same rate as other pension payments. You can call Centrelink for more details.

If you receive Carer Payment you can also get a Pensioner Concession Card that entitles you to low cost medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. You may also be entitled to Rent Assistance. As well, Carer Payment and Carer Allowance continue during respite. That is, you can have a break from caring for up to 63 days each year without losing your payment.

This year October 21 was designated Carers Day - a day for us all to consider the carers in our community. But, as has been highlighted during National Carers Week, carers need some help all year round. How about taking care of a carer you know, even just for a little while?

You can personally make a big difference to a carer’s day by giving them a break looking after the person they care for; maybe preparing a meal for them, taking them to the movies, mowing the lawn, or perhaps just dropping by for a chat.

Of course, if you’re a carer yourself, you can get more general information on how to get help to help others at your local Self Care pharmacy. Call in and ask for the

*Carer Support* Fact Card. Phone the Pharmaceutical Society on 1300 369 772 for the nearest location.