

ALZHEIMERS > WELL-BEING

Understanding Respite Care



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Full-time caregiving is an around-the-clock job, but respite care can give live-in caregivers a short-term break.

Caregivers are often managing caring for a loved one with work, other family responsibilities, their own health, home upkeep, and more.

Whether respite involves hours or weeks, respite care can help caregivers attend appointments, run errands, work outside their home, or simply take some time to relax and recharge.

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What is respite care?

Respite care helps provide a break for live-in caregivers including family members or professionals. Caregivers may need respite care for just long enough to run important errands, or they might need help to care for their loved ones while they're out of town for several days or weeks.

The caregiver and the respite care professional will need to make respite care arrangements in advance.

Respite care may take many forms. It may be provided by:

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- home care agencies
- some nursing and assisted living facilities
- adult day centers
- individual care professionals

Respite care services

The exact services you'll receive with respite care depend on your needs and situation. As a rule, respite care professionals are responsible for keeping the person in their care [safe and healthy](#). Depending on the client, this might include:

- **Assistance with household tasks.** Respite care professionals who visit clients at home can help complete everyday chores, such as laundry and meal preparation.
- **Assistance with dressing and bathing.** Respite care professionals can assist clients with bathing, dressing, using the bathroom, and other essential daily tasks.
- **Transportation to medical appointments.** Respite care services can ensure clients get to all medical appointments safely and on time.
- **General medical care.** Respite care professionals won't be able to give a hospital-level of care, but they'll be able to help with medications, check on wounds, and perform other basic medical care. Some respite care professionals can handle more medically complex clients.
- **Companionship.** Respite care professionals can keep clients [company](#) and make sure they're well cared for.

What are the types of respite care?

There are several types of respite care to fit different situations and fill different needs. The most common types of respite care are discussed below.

Informal respite care

Informal respite care is care offered by friends or family members. This is often a great solution for occasional errands or appointments, especially if you have trusted loved ones who live close by.

Adult day services

Adult day services are great options for seniors who enjoy spending time

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[socialization](#), along with supervision and medical care. They can allow you to work or complete needed tasks during the day.

In-home care

In-home care comes to you. You can find in-home respite care for temporary situations or work out a regular schedule with a home care aid. You can find respite in-home care through home health agencies or by looking for individual caregivers.

Residential care

Residential care is respite care in a senior community, such as a nursing or assisted living facility. This type of care allows for overnight stays and can last for several weeks. You can use this type of respite care if you'll be out-of-town or need a longer break.



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Why you may need respite care

One of the primary reasons for respite care is to help reduce [caregiver burnout](#). Caring for a loved one full-time is a big responsibility. Many family caregivers are happy to take care of someone who is such an important part of their lives, but that doesn't mean it can't be stressful.

In fact, caregiver burnout is incredibly common. Family caregivers often find themselves overwhelmed, frustrated, and anxious. Over time, this can

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Respite care is a great way to step back and take a breath. It can help you relax and lessen some of the symptoms of caregiver burnout. When you know your loved one is being cared for in a safe environment, even for a few hours, it's one less thing for you to juggle. That can make a significant difference in your overall mental and physical well-being.

In addition to reducing general burnout, there are several situations respite care can help with. These include when the primary family caregiver:

- works outside the home
- has out-of-town obligations
- has a scheduled vacation
- has an upcoming major medical procedure
- has been showing signs of **severe burnout**

Tips for self-care when you're the caregiver

It's easy to lose track of your own health when you're caring for someone else. However, caregiver burnout can damage your mental health, physical health, and your overall well-being. It's important to look out for yourself and take time for self-care when you're a caregiver.

Here are some tips for taking care of yourself if you're a caregiver:

- Stay connected with friends through phone calls, video chats, and meetups.
- Keep up with hobbies you can do from home, such as reading, crafting, cooking, gaming, or music.
- Stay active with short daily walks or other quick exercises.
- Try yoga, meditation, or other calming practices.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and healthy fluids.
- Keep yourself on a regular sleep schedule.

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How much does respite care cost?

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- your insurance
- your location

For instance, in-home care and assisted living both [cost an average](#) of around \$150 per day, while adult day services cost an average of \$78 a day. Most insurance plans won't cover the cost of respite care. However, there are resources you can turn to for assistance.

- **Informal respite.** Informal respite with friends and family is normally a free or low cost way to arrange respite care.
- **Medicaid.** Medicaid doesn't cover respite care as a standard benefit. However, many states offer a [Medicaid Waiver program](#) that does include coverage toward respite care. You can use [this locator](#) to find your state's Medicaid office.
- **Veterans Benefits.** If you receive a VA pension, you might also qualify for a benefit called [Aid and Attendance](#) that can be used for respite care. Many VA facilities also offer up to 30 days of respite care for qualifying Veterans.
- **Long-term care insurance.** You can generally use your long-term care insurance policy to pay for respite care. However, this varies by policy, so it's best to call your insurance company and check.
- **Sliding scale adult day services.** Many adult services, especially those offered by community-based senior centers, nonprofit organizations, or churches, have sliding-scale payment options. Some day service providers employ social workers or financial counselors who can help you find ways to cover the cost of respite care.

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How to choose respite care

It can be difficult to choose the right respite care professional. Many family caregivers are anxious about leaving their loved ones with an

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Questions to ask when choosing a respite care professional

If you're selecting a care professional to come into your home, here are a few questions you may want to ask:

- How long have you been providing healthcare?
- How long have you been providing in-home care?
- Are you CPR certified?
- Do you have any training in healthcare?
- How do you handle emergencies on the job?
- Can I speak to any of your previous clients?

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If they're able, it's a good idea to have your loved one be a part of the interview process. Ideally, they can talk with any potential respite care professionals and ask questions of their own. After the interview, you can talk with your loved one and get their feedback before you make your final choice.

If you're selecting an adult day service or residential care facility, it's a good idea to ask:

- What training does your staff have?
- Do you have nurses or other medical professionals on staff?
- What safety procedures are in place?
- Are there daily activities offered?
- Can you provide meals and snacks that meet my loved one's dietary needs?

How to find respite care

There are a few different ways to find respite care. If you know of any friends or family who might be able to provide care, they might be the best place to start. If not, you can use these resources:

- **Eldercare Locator.** The [Eldercare Locator](#) will connect you with your local Area Agency on Aging. Your local Area Agency on Aging can help you secure respite care, find adult day services, and get other caregiver support.

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- **National Adult Day Services Association (NADSA).** NADSA is a directory of adult day services around the country that you can use to find care in your community.

Overcoming obstacles and challenges

There can be many barriers to finding and using respite care.

Concerns you may have include:

- trusting another person to take care of your loved one safely and reliably
- how your loved one will react to your absence
- concerns about whether your loved one will like the person
- cost
- feelings of guilt at needing time for yourself

Tips that can help include:

- speaking with your local health services, friends, and others in your community, and searching on the [ARCH Respite Network](#)
- ensuring anyone you employ has the necessary credentials and experience for your needs
- considering which of the many available options would best suit your needs and budget
- discussing practical needs with friends and family members who may be able to help
- arranging for short-term respite at first and increasing over time as you build trust with your respite carer

Remember that, as a caregiver, meeting your own needs will make you better able to look after your loved one.

Frequently asked questions

What does respite care do?

Respite carers step in for a primary caregiver to allow them to take a break or spend time doing essential tasks they can't do while providing care. Services range widely, for example, from live-in care to someone who comes by to chat with your loved one for an hour each week.

What are the disadvantages of respite care?

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can get with funding, for instance, through local charities.

Other major concerns often relate to trusting a loved one with a stranger and personal feelings of guilt at needing a break. Talking with social care experts, friends, and family members and working on choosing the right respite provider may help you overcome these concerns.

Respite care costs

Respite care costs can be expensive and will depend on the type and extent of care you need. However, you may find you can get help through Medicaid, long-term health insurance, a veteran's pension, and some adult day services, such as community organizations.

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Bottom line

Respite care can help full-time family caregivers take a break. It's a great way for caregivers to work, complete important errands, travel, and reduce the impact of caregiver burnout.

You can find respite care from family and friends, home care professionals, adult day services, and resident care facilities. Respite care generally isn't covered by insurance, but there are resources available to help pay for care.