

Navigating Aged Care Services

Australian health services have undergone significant change in recent years, with offerings now more user-focused, based on individual need and choice.

Whether you are considering support services, allied healthcare options, mental health support, aids and equipment or modifications to your home, you may be eligible for some government-subsidised support.

The Australian health system is complex, so it is understandable if you feel a little overwhelmed about where to start. It may be useful to chat with your GP (or the practice nurse) about your needs or seek some advice from Fight Parkinson's to help direct you to the most appropriate options for you or to clarify information about what services are available.

For people over the age of 65, you may be eligible to receive supports and services via My Aged Care (MAC).

MAC was established as a single point of entry to federal government-subsidised aged care services, with the intention to provide a streamlined process of support throughout the aged care journey. Depending on your needs and wishes, MAC can assist you with accessing entry-level services through to residential aged care.

People living with Parkinson's or Atypical Parkinson's conditions aged over 65 may benefit from support from MAC to help maintain or improve their independence, safety and quality of life.

Am I eligible to apply?

To access MAC, you need to be over the age of 65 (50 years or older for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people).

Navigating aged care services for people with Parkinson's

- You may be eligible for aged care services if you have:
- noticed a change in how you manage everyday activities
- experienced a change in your mobility
- been diagnosed with a medical condition such as Parkinson's
- experienced a change in your usual care arrangement
- had a recent hospital admission or fall

You can check your eligibility via the MAC website: myagedcare.gov.au/eligibility-checker or by calling the MAC contact centre: ph. 1800 200 422.

How can MAC support me?

MAC can provide information and advice to help you access aged care services. If you are eligible for aged care services, MAC can help you to access assistance, allied healthcare services or equipment to help you complete everyday activities, optimise your mobility and safety, and improve your quality of life.

Once your eligibility to access MAC services is established, you will be allocated an assessor who will perform a face-to-face assessment to explore your needs in more detail. They will determine what supports would be of benefit and whether you are eligible for government-funded services. Depending on your situation and reasons for seeking support, you will be allocated to one of two assessor options:

- Home support assessment with a Regional Assessment Service (RAS), or
- Comprehensive assessment with Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS).

If you are seeking entry-level services, you will likely be referred to an RAS assessor, who will assess your eligibility for the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP). This program is designed for those who need a bit of help to remain at home, improve their independence, stay connected with their community or delay/avoid residential care. CHSP supports include services such as:

- domestic assistance
- personal care assistance
- in-home respite
- nursing care
- delivered meals
- shopping assistance
- social support

- allied health`

If your needs are considered more complex, you will likely be assessed by an ACAS assessor, who will assess your eligibility for a Home Care Package, a short-term restorative care package, residential respite and/or permanent residential care

What is a Home Care Package?

Given the complexity of Parkinson's, many individuals will be approved for a Home Care Package. Home Care Packages range in level of care and funding allocation, from Level 1 (lowest level of care) to Level 4 (highest level care).

A Home Care Package incorporates a range of services, therapies and supports and offers greater flexibility and coordination than entry-level services. Given the high demand, individuals approved for a Home Care Package are required to await allocation of the package (dependent upon a national priority system).

Once a package becomes available, you have an opportunity to select your preferred provider. An income assessment will determine your level of government subsidy and any contribution you will be asked to pay. While awaiting your package, you may be eligible to access a short-term restorative package (time-limited burst of funds and services) or directed to use entry-level services (CHSP) and private options.

I want to remain at home

Why would you consider residential respite or permanent care?

If you are reliant upon another person to support your care at home, you or your caregiver may be concerned about what would happen if they were temporarily unable to provide support. Examples may be if your partner requires hospitalisation, needs a break from their caring responsibilities or is going on holidays. ACAS can provide approval for residential respite in the event you need to access residential care temporarily. You can use up to 63 days of residential respite per year. Being approved doesn't mean you have to use it, but it can be good 'insurance' to have in place.

If you or your loved ones have concerns about your ability to continue living at home in the long-term, and you are seeking permanent residential care, you will require an ACAS assessment to provide approval.

Costs associated with aged care services

Most aged care services require a client contribution, determined by your level of income or a means assessment (income plus assets). Refer to the MAC website for further information about costs associated with CHSP services, home care packages, residential respite or permanent residential care.

How can I access MAC?

To check your eligibility and apply for a MAC assessment, you can contact MAC on 1800 200 422 or you can apply online:

www.myagedcare.gov.au/assessment/apply-online.

If you prefer, a family member or healthcare professional can make the referral. A GP referral is not essential.

Further information:

For more detailed information for those considering aged care services, go to:

www.myagedcare.gov.au

or call 1800 200 422

You can also contact Fight Parkinson's to discuss your individual situation on 1800 931 031 or info@fightparkinsons.org.au.

Fight Parkinson's is a leading source of specialised health information and advice services. Through research, education and support, we strive to improve the lives of people living with Parkinson's, PSP, MSA and CBS.

Any medial information provided is for general information purposes only. You should always talk to your treating doctor and qualified healthcare providers for personal medical and health-related instructions.

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