



10 THINGS EVERY CARER SHOULD KNOW

1. **Look after yourself!** You are very important. Carers tend to suffer physical and mental ill-health as a result of caring. Make sure you know how to care safely (e.g. don't risk injuring your back through lifting incorrectly), eat properly, get a good night's sleep and find out what works for you in alleviating stress. For more information visit the [The Princess Trust for Carers' website](#).
2. **Take a break.** Caring can be hard work and stressful. Having a break can make all the difference. Speak to your local council or charities such as [The Princess Royal Trust for Carers](#) or [Crossroads Care](#) about arranging alternative care for the person you are caring for. You may also be able to get financial help towards the cost of a break.
3. **You are not alone.** There are nearly six million unpaid carers in the UK (Census 2001) and many will be experiencing similar things to you. You can meet other carers by joining support groups at your [local Trust Carers' Centre](#) or local council.
4. **Tell your doctor.** All too often carers can be so preoccupied with the health and well-being of the person they are caring for that their own needs take a back seat. However, paying more attention to yourself can be very positive for you and the person you care for. Let your GP know of your caring role so they can make sure you stay healthy. They can also put you in touch with other organisations that may be able to help.
5. **Ask for a Carer's Assessment.** You are legally entitled to an assessment of your needs as a carer by your local council. This gives you the chance to talk about the impact of being a carer on your life and what might make things easier for you. For information on how to apply visit [Carers Direct section on assessments](#) or speak to your nearest Carers' Centre for help in applying.
6. **Make sure you are receiving all the financial support you are entitled to including:**
 - **The Carer's Allowance** is a benefit for people over 16 years old who are caring for at least 35 hours a week. There are restrictions, but if you are not working or are in education you may be entitled to claim. It is currently worth £53.90 per week.
 - **Income Support.** If you are under 60 years old, on a low income and have savings up to £16,000 you should be eligible to receive Income Support. The Department for Work and



Pensions will answer any queries you may have regarding [Income Support](#), including any questions you may have if you're already claiming.

- **Carer Premium.** If you meet the conditions for Carer's Allowance and receive Income Support or Pension Credit, you may receive an extra amount, which is known as the Carer Premium, of up to £27.15 a week.
 - **Tax credits.** An encouraging nine out of ten families with children, and many more without, are entitled to some form of tax credits. You can find out if you qualify online in minutes [via the Inland Revenue](#). For more of an overview to tax credits, as well as the other benefits already discussed you can visit the [Directgov benefits](#) section.
 - **Disability Living Allowance (DLA).** Find out about the financial support available to disabled people, including Disability Living Allowance by visiting the [Carers Direct section on the DLA](#).
 - **Housing benefit** is available to help people who are on benefits or who have low incomes to help pay their rent, or their council tax, and is claimed from and paid by your local council. For more information visit [Shelter's section on Housing benefit](#).
 - **Protect your State Pension.** If you care for 20 hours or more a week, but don't receive Carer's Allowance or Income Support, you may be missing out on National Insurance contributions towards your State Pension. The new Carer's Credit helps protect your State Pension if you've had to give up work or work fewer hours because of a caring responsibility. Take up of this has been low, so visit [Directgov's section on caring and your pension](#) or call the Carer's Allowance Unit on 0845 608 4321 (textphone 0845 604 5312).
7. **Get a grant.** You may be eligible for a grant from your council or [Carers' Centre](#) towards the cost of a short break, transport or buying a specialist piece of equipment or a domestic appliance.
 8. **Decide on the help that's best for you.** If you have been assessed by your local council as needing support services to help you in your caring role, you can choose direct payments. They give you the power to buy in and arrange help yourself instead of receiving it directly from social services. For more information visit [Directgov's section on Direct payments](#).
 9. **Contact your local Jobcentre Plus.** Taking on caring shouldn't mean that you must automatically think you have to give up work. If you are looking to return to paid employment, Jobcentre Plus are able to



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provide grants to cover the cost of replacement care to enable you to do training or attend job interviews.

- 10. Help is out there.** There are organisations in most areas of the UK that specialise in providing information and support to those who care for a relative, friend or neighbour who could not manage on their own. The Princess Royal Trust for Carers has [a network of 144 Carers' Centres](#) across the UK, offering advice, information and support, as well as online support forums for carers and young carers (see www.carers.org or <http://www.youngcarer.com/>). Additionally, there are other specific services available from certain councils and other voluntary organisations.