

Can aids and equipment really make a difference?

Aids and equipment help people maintain their independence and safety. You will find that there is a huge range of gadgets and equipment available to use in your family member's home, in your home and on outings.

Despite the benefits, older people are sometimes reluctant to consider using aids and equipment. Commonly they believe the equipment will reduce their independence, rather than help it - and that it will be a visible sign to others that they are not coping.

*"Mum said, 'I'm not using one of those. They're for old people.'
She was 82 at the time."*

The first step in dealing with reluctance is to talk openly with your family member about some of the things that have become difficult for them. Look for opportunities to raise your concerns and suggest aids and equipment that may be useful. For example, if walking is becoming more strenuous, use an outing to mention the benefits of a 'wheely walker' - some have a seat for taking rests and a basket for shopping items.

By finding out about the range of options available, you will be more able to identify aids and equipment that could be of benefit to your family member - while also making caring easier for you.

What is available?

The following list will give you an idea of the range of aids and equipment available.

Mobility aids

Walking sticks or frames, wheely walkers, manual and motorised wheelchairs, scooters - even car accessories and modifications. Mobility aids can help prevent falls.

Personal care

Shower stools or chairs, shower hoses, bath seats and boards, over-toilet frames, commodes, urinals, continence pads and supplies, aids to assist with dressing, aids to manage medications and much more.

Personal safety

Personal alarm-call systems provide 24-hour monitoring. An alarm can be discreetly worn on a neck chain or like a watch. In an emergency family or an ambulance can be notified immediately. I.d. bracelets are also a good idea for those who may wander.

Home safety

Handrails, ramps, tap turners, non-slip mats, easy-grip utensils, easy-pour kettles - just about anything to do with day-to-day activities in and around the home.

Seating

Pressure care cushions, height-adjustable chairs, recliners, tilt chairs, day beds. The right seating will minimise pressure and keep your family member's skin intact, while making caring easier for you.

Bedding and lifting equipment

Back rests, bed sticks, tables and trays, pressure care mattresses, manual and electric beds, mobile hoists and fixed wall hoists.



Communication aids

Communication boards and books, audio and large print books, magnifiers and telephone accessories. A huge range of specialised devices are also available and can be tailored to individual needs.

*"The new chair has made things so much easier.
Harry didn't want it at first, but now he tells others about it."*

How to find out more

First, talk to a health care professional to get the right advice. An Occupational Therapist (OT) will be able to assist with most of the equipment listed above. However, for information on mobility aids a physiotherapist is recommended and for most communication aids a speech pathologist is required.

Contact [Commonwealth Carelink Centres](#) (ph: 1800 052 222 for details) to be put in contact with the right health care professional. Through government-funded services, consultations are generally free.

You may then like to visit a store that hires and sells aids and equipment, to look at the options. You might do this at:

- ▣ [The Independent Living Centre](#) - ph: 1300 885 886
- ▣ [Making Life Easy](#) - ph: 03 9572 1300

By hiring the equipment first, your family member can try it out to ensure it best suits their needs. Your health professional can tell you about government funding to help with the purchase cost - if eligible they will complete the necessary paperwork for you.

As the needs of your family member change, the aids and equipment most suited to them may differ. Ask for a re-assessment at any time.

Further information:

- ▣ [Aids and equipment program](#) - ph: 1800 783 783
- ▣ [Information for veterans on aids and equipment](#) - ph: 133 254

Contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* to request the above information sheets be sent to you - or to find out about other information sheets in this series.

*Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.

We do our best to keep these links up to date, but the internet changes all the time. If you can no longer access any of the above resources, please go to our [Internet Troubleshooting Guide](#), or email us at website@carersvic.org.au