




An emotional time

A practical guide to dealing with the emotions
of moving a loved one into residential care



A photograph of two men standing in a kitchen. The man on the left is middle-aged with grey hair, wearing a light blue polo shirt with a small logo on the chest. The man on the right is older with white hair, wearing a blue and white checkered button-down shirt. Both are smiling warmly. The background shows a kitchen with white cabinets and a hanging light fixture. A large, semi-transparent pink circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the main text.

Walking alongside a loved one as they transition into care can be a challenging time for some people.

For many family members and friends, the journey can be a rollercoaster of emotions, alternating between loss and guilt on some days and relief and gratitude on others.

Wherever you are in your journey as a relative, representative or friend, we hope you will find some practical guidance here about how you can support someone you love through their move.

How can I help my loved one prepare for their move?

Visit the care community in advance

Visit the care community with your loved one (if their health allows) to get a better sense of the layout of the room. Try visualising how you can make the space more homely so you can help decide what to bring. Our *Moving in* brochure offers some useful recommendations and is available at the care community or online at: **opalhealthcare.com.au/welcome**

If you'd like further assistance personalising the space, please ask our team in the care community.

Help your loved one sort through belongings

This can be an emotional task, but you can lend some support by helping to divide items into 'Bring', 'Donate to charity,' 'Discard' or 'Pass on to others'. If you need assistance packing or relocating larger items (or a larger volume of items), speak to an Opal team member about our *Need Help Moving your Things* guide or download it at:

opalhealthcare.com.au/welcome

Attend to paperwork as early as possible

If possible, try to get paperwork signed before moving in, so that move-in day can be all about helping your loved one to settle into their new home. It's especially important to consider whether a trusted family member or friend has been identified to help them manage their affairs and make health, medical and lifestyle decisions, in case they are no longer able to do this for themselves. For more information about power of attorney or enduring guardian matters, speak to the general manager of the care community or download a copy of our *5-Step Guide* at: **opalhealthcare.com.au/welcome**



Help to personalise the new space and make it feel familiar

Help to select things to display that will help the new space feel like home. These include favourite bedspreads, photos, keepsakes and memorabilia. For more ideas about personalising the space, read our *Moving in* brochure available in the care community or download a copy at: opalhealthcare.com.au/welcome

Encourage positivity

Help your loved one to focus on what they'll gain in care rather than on any perceived loss. For many people, aged care can be a very positive move and a time to enjoy companionship and receive some valuable support with daily living. Try to emphasise how aged care can help focus on reablement and revive old passions and pastimes.

Offer empathy and comfort

It can be a very emotional time for some people moving into care. Try not to judge or rush; just make yourself available to listen and to be a compassionate ear for any concerns and anxieties. If you or your loved one needs professional support or counseling, please speak to a team member about support in your area.

What can I do to make move-in day easier on my loved one?

Arrive at the agreed time so that our team is prepared for your arrival.

If you're unavailable to be there on move-in day

Please don't worry as our team in the care community will help your loved one settle in well. Feel free to give our team a call to discuss any specific requests or requirements or to check in during the day.

Arrange the move when you have the time

Try and schedule the move when you have the mental energy to support your loved one without feeling stressed or rushed yourself. Some care communities will accommodate evening and weekend moves but please be aware that this may mean that the general manager and other key support team members may not be present.

'First days, Your way'

This guide is a great resource to help you get a sense of what the first day will be like and to consider things like whether your loved one would like to have their first meal in the dining room with you, or with a new friend in the care community, or perhaps prefer a tray in their room until they've settled in. The guide will also help prepare you and your loved one for meetings that need to take place within specific timeframes, such as the initial clinical assessment and the lifestyle assessment. You'll receive a copy of *First Days, Your Way* when you arrive or you can download a copy any time at:

opalhealthcare.com.au/welcome

Be led by your loved one

Try to respect their choices on the day. For some people, the first day can be overwhelming and some may choose to spend it quietly in their room. For others, getting out and about, meeting other residents and participating in activities is a good option. Ask the person you're supporting what they'd like to do and try to support them in the choices they make.

Consider an appropriate time to say goodbye

Stay as long as your loved one needs you, but also be prepared to leave when the time comes. Often the best time to leave is when our new resident is engaged in another activity. Try not to draw out the goodbye, and if you'll be coming back soon to visit, offer reassuring words about when they can expect you.

With the permission of your loved one, arrange for a team member to call you

Consider whether you'd prefer a call that evening or the next morning to let you know how your loved one is settling in. Our *Who Do I Talk To* leaflet has the relevant contact numbers, should you need to get in touch.



How can I best support my loved one once they have moved into care?

If you're able to, visit as often as you can

Try and spend quality time with your loved one. In the first few weeks of care, it's especially important to demonstrate that you are still involved in their care. If you don't live nearby, or are unable to visit for any reason, we can support you to speak with your loved one on the phone or support you to arrange for others to visit.

If your loved one's health allows, and where possible, arrange to go out together

Enjoy meals, walks and celebrate family milestones and special occasions together. Connection to family and community is often important to many residents and can help mark time and provide a sense of anticipation.

If necessary and where possible, accompany your loved one to medical appointments

It can be helpful to be in the room during medical appointments so that you can help communicate any important information, instructions or guidance to our team. If you can't be there, don't worry. The doctor should make sure that our team receives any specific instructions.

Check in with our care team often

Ask questions to reassure yourself that your loved one is being well cared for. If either of you has concerns or questions, arrange a family conference or a call with our team to put your mind at ease. It's important that you feel supported in advocating for your loved one.

Although it can be confronting, you may choose to offer your loved one an opportunity to discuss their end of life choices

Many residents want to talk about the type of care they'd like to receive when end of life is near so that you and the care team are aware of their choice and preferences. If you need help or support having this conversation, please speak with a team member for assistance.

If your loved one struggles to communicate in English

You may wish to speak to our team about helping them to access government translation and interpreting services. For more information about overcoming language barriers, please ask for a copy of our *Overcoming Language Barriers* resource pack, which is available in multiple languages. You can also download a copy at: opalhealthcare.com.au/welcome

Be kind to yourself

Remember that you have not failed your loved one by supporting them to move into a care community that offers full time care. Take comfort in knowing that your loved one is having all their daily needs met and is being cared for by carers who come to the home refreshed and re-energised each day, eager to bring your loved one joy.

If your loved one is living with dementia

Please ask our team for a copy of *Kindness for Carers*, which provides additional guidance and support for relatives and friends moving a loved one living with dementia into care. *Kindness for Carers* can also be downloaded at: opalhealthcare.com.au/welcome

Give feedback

There are many ways to tell us what you think or feel. Call us, email us, or go online to: opalhealthcare.com.au/contact-us/feedback

If you'd prefer a hardcopy form, please pick one up at reception or ask for a form to be mailed to you.

Remember, if you, your loved one or other family members are struggling with decisions related to aged care, there is support available. Please just speak to one of our friendly team members.

If you require urgent mental health assistance, call Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636 or go to beyondblue.org.au or contact your GP for a referral to a counsellor or psychologist.

For more general information about life in our care communities and how you can support your loved one, please read our *Welcome Home* booklet or download a copy online at: opalhealthcare.com.au/welcome

