

Newsletter

HOME CARE HQ



BRAIN GAMES FOR SENIORS



WHAT'S INSIDE

- KITCHEN SAFETY PRODUCT
- DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE
- CAN I EMPLOY FAMILY MEMBERS?
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Brain games for seniors: Sudoku, crosswords and more!

Keeping an active mind is as important for our brain health as keeping an active body. Research has shown that the types of activities we do, how mentally and socially engaging they are, and how frequently we do them, can improve connections between existing brain cells and build our brain reserves.

Dementia Australia recommends incorporating a variety of activities into our daily lives to assist us to maintain good brain health. So it's good to know that you can have fun with brain games and have a positive impact on your health at the same time. Better still, these online brain games are so versatile, they can be enjoyed anytime, anywhere, on your own, or with friends!

Sudoku

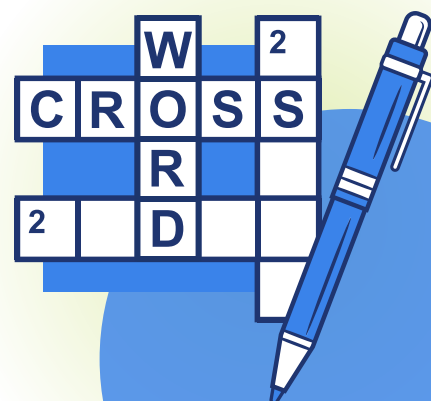
Sudoku is one of the world's most popular number-placement puzzles that involves filling a 9-box grid with numbers. It sounds simple, but there are actually 9 'mini boxes' within the larger 9-box grid! The trick is that you have to fill each of the 9 boxes with the numbers 1 to 9, without repeating any numbers of the same row, column, or box! Fortunately, to get you started, the puzzle setter provides a partially completed grid for you to complete.

<https://sudoku.com/>

Word Search

Word search games can be a fun and engaging way to improve cognitive function, increase vocabulary, and reduce stress. They can also be a useful tool for improving spelling, concentration, and memory skills! Word Search can be done anywhere and anytime, and with these online games, you can pick and choose the themes and topics of interest to you, and even share games with family and friends online.

<https://thewordsearch.com/>



Jigsaw Planet

Jigsaw puzzles are an old-time family favourite for many people. Most of us can recall times spent over the years, whiling away the hours placing the right piece in the right place, to create a picture of one scene or another. The beauty of a jigsaw puzzle is that it can be done alone or with others, and there is no time pressure for getting it finished. There is nothing quite like the sense of accomplishment when placing that last piece to create your latest masterpiece!

<https://www.jigsawplanet.com/>

Chess

This ancient game has been around for centuries and is well known for being challenging, strategic and highly skills-based. Two opponents battle it out with 16 game pieces each, strategically moving their pieces around the 64 black and white squares in an 8x8 grid. At the start, each player controls sixteen pieces and the player who captures their opponent's King is the ultimate winner.

<https://www.chess.com/>

Seniors online daily crossword

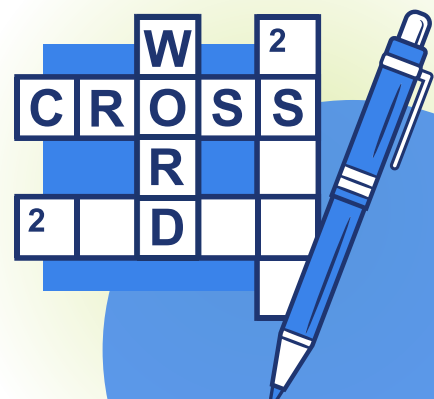
Crossword puzzles can offer lots of benefits, such as improving vocabulary, enhancing problem-solving skills, boosting memory, and reducing stress. If you love to challenge yourself with a daily crossword, this online crossword puzzle page is run by Seniors Victoria, so you can be confident that you won't need a special account or login to play every day of the week.

<https://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/services-information/crossword>

Lumosity

Used by over 100 million people worldwide, Lumosity is a website that offers brain training games, with a huge range of activities designed to suit everyone's playing and cognitive level. Every day, there are a fresh set of games to really stimulate and challenge you, so you'll never be bored!

<https://www.lumosity.com/en/>



Employing family or friends

Every now and then, a consumer might ask their provider whether they can use their home care package funds to pay a family member or close friend to provide paid services for them. The current Home Care Packages Operational Manual for Consumers covers this in detail to ensure information is available and a consistent approach is used when answering this question.

In summary, the Manual states that payment to families and friends for care services is excluded unless **all of the following requirements** can be met:

- There is a 'thin market' where no suitable workforce is available at all, and
- The person is especially qualified to perform the job, and
- The person does not live with the consumer, and
- The provider has a robust probity plan in place.

A 'thin market' means the consumer is living in very rural and remote Australia **and** is from an Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander or Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background.

Providers also need to document their response to a request by considering:

- The inclusions and exclusions framework,
- The process to meet their obligations for monitoring and compliance of contractors and sub-contractors,
- Any potential risks to the consumer and how this impacts their ability to effectively manage those risks,
- Their policies regarding where they stand on this matter.

The Manual states that payment to families and friends for care services are typically a program exclusion, and they direct family and friends to instead access the Carer's Payment to support them financially in their caring role.

Information about the Carer Payment is available here:

<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/carers-payment>

Feel free to talk to us for information about the Home Care Packages Consumer Manual or visit this link:

[Consumer Manual >](#)



Swallowing problems and Dysphagia

Did you know that humans swallow at least 900 times a day? We often take swallowing for granted, but for many older people and people with chronic health conditions, living with swallowing problems places them at risk of choking and other serious illness.

As your home care provider, we need to ask questions, and be observant to any changes, to capture information about any care needs that relate to your eating and drinking. This may occur in a variety of ways, including:

- **Assessment:** identifying key areas of concern, e.g. new medical diagnoses, weight changes, food texture & diet changes, and following-up incident reports from support workers or others involved in your care.
- **Identifying risk factors:** e.g. medical conditions such as Stroke, various neurological conditions, dementia, dental problems, weight loss, history of coughing or gagging whilst eating or drinking, etc.
- **Setting goals:** developing a care plan of services, handy assistive equipment, and other supports to safely maintain your independence, manage your swallowing issues, maintain adequate nutrition and reduce the risk of choking.
- **Referral:** ensuring relevant specialists are involved, e.g. GP, Speech Pathologist, Dietitian, Dentist, Physio, Occupational Therapist, nurse, and so forth.
- **Directing funds:** ensuring your home care funds are prioritised and spent where they are most needed to maintain your health and wellbeing associated with eating and drinking safely.
- **Monitoring, review & responding to changes:** responding to any issues and changes, and adjusting your care plan and services, if and when required.

Please let us know if you have any concerns about eating, drinking or swallowing and we will refer you for an assessment.

<https://www.safeswallowing.com.au/>

Product spotlight: Care Food Co.

With around 1 million Australians having difficulty with swallowing, preparing modified food that is both tasty and nutritious for people with dysphagia can be challenging.

When brothers David and John McAuley and Saxon Joye experienced this firsthand, they created Care Food Co. to help people with swallowing difficulties enjoy food again with their convenient home delivery service.

With food being one of the great pleasures in life, their aim was to create a range of great tasting food, as close to nature intended as possible. For example, their carrot is literally 100% carrot, with nothing else added.

Other benefits include:

- Arrives with at least a 10-day shelf life
- Delivered fresh and chilled and can be frozen
- Mix-and-match the foods you like to create a different meal every day
- No additives, fortifiers or thickeners of any kind in the pureed food range
- Food is cold pressed, ensuring nutrition is locked-in without compromising taste or appearance

They are currently delivering throughout NSW, VIC, QLD, WA, SA, TAS and ACT. If you live outside the areas listed, please contact them for assistance.

<https://www.carefoodco.com.au/>

For residents in NT, Ezy Foods is an alternative provider of pureed food.

<https://ezyfoods.com.au/>

We can help arrange for a professional assessment and recommendation for this great service if you need a modified diet. Please note, preparation and delivery of meals can be included in your home care package, but not the raw food component.



Can my package pay for: Medical expenses?

We are often asked to clarify what is included and excluded under Home Care Packages funding relating to the use of package funds for the payment of Medical Expenses.

Commonly asked questions include whether package funds can pay for:

- Specialist appointment or surgical fees
- Medicare gap payment for medical consultations
- Medicare gap payment for Allied Health services, i.e. podiatry, physio, psychology
- Private health insurance gap payment
- Medications, Vitamins & Supplements (PBS or non-PBS)
- Over-the-counter tablets, creams, lotions and similar pharmacy products
- Cost of payment for medication dose administration aids, i.e. Webster Pak

Here is the latest advice we've received on this subject:

The intent of the HCP Program is to deliver aged care services which may include medication management. Subsidisation of medications using HCP funds is not permitted. While this means we can fund a service to help you take your medication, we cannot fund the medical or medication-related aspects of your healthcare, regardless of whether it is covered by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) or not.

With regards to services and items covered by the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) or the PBS, these are considered items already funded by the Australian Government. Home Care Package funds cannot be used to pay for services and items covered by the MBS, including co-payments or gap fees, payment for consultations, tests or surgery with medical practitioners (GPs and specialists).

As the government already subsidise the health system via the Medicare Benefits Scheme, we are unable to use your government-subsidised home care package funds at the same time, for the same purpose.

If you need any further clarification, please get in touch with us for a chat.



7 entertaining and educational podcasts for seniors!



If you're not familiar with podcasts, they're basically a digital audio program which, unlike live programs like radio, allow you the convenience of tuning into a specific episode - at a time that suits you.

With millions of podcasts to choose from, we've picked the Top 7 that are specifically focused on healthy ageing, inspiring stories and seniors news.

The Baby Boomers' Guide to Life in the 21st Century

This award winning health and lifestyle podcast is for older Australian's who want to get the most out of life. It covers everything from maximising the age pension, to human rights, to esteemed professors unravelling the mysteries of our brain, as well as celebrating our country's most remarkable seniors.

<https://babyboomersguide.com.au/>

The Aged Care Enrichment podcast

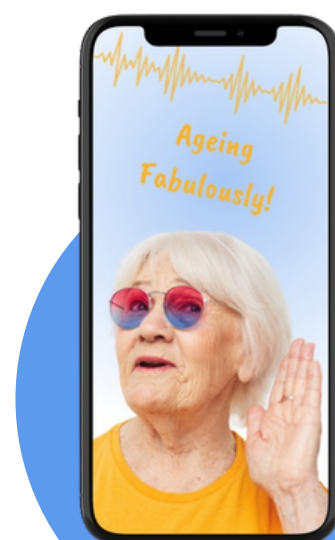
With a fantastic range of industry experts, these passionate thought leaders share their unique points of view on how aged care is changing and examine ways to improve the quality of life for seniors. Topics include: How feeling bad about your age affects your health, how memory works and its link with emotions, and why women's bodies age differently to men.

<https://silvradventures.com.au/podcast/>

Life's Booming podcast

Hosted by ABC's quick-witted James Valentine, this multi award winning podcast showcases the lives of over 50s dreams, fears, desires and adventures. From overcoming extreme challenges, to living without regrets, they cover it all!

<https://www.seniors.com.au/lifes-booming-podcast>



Be Connected podcast

This podcast is designed to build your confidence in navigating our ever increasing online world, so you can be more engaged with family, friends and community. Topics range from answering common questions on how to use the internet more securely e.g. What online scammers don't want you to know, to educational and fun, such as, how do I search my family history online?

<https://beconnected.esafety.gov.au/podcast/>

COTA SA - Voices on Ageing podcast

If you're feeling stuck or disconnected, this 6 episode mini-series introduces you to the personal stories of older Australians on how they've overcome challenges, empowered themselves to reconnect with life and community, and what helped them to succeed along the way. Topics include: Staying connected at home, finding purpose and reconnecting after loss, and more.

<https://cotasa.org.au/programs-and-services/voices-on-ageing-podcast>

The Dementia podcast

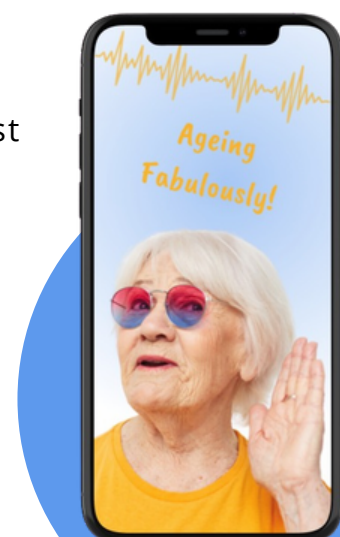
This podcast includes interviews with a range of health practitioners, researchers and dementia care specialists, as well as people living with dementia and their family and friends. Hosted by Associate Professor Colm Cunningham from the Dementia Centre, topics include the latest research from both local and international experts.

<https://www.dementiapodcast.com/>

Get Connected by National Seniors Australia

If you've ever wanted a quick weekly digest of seniors news from around Australia, this one may be for you. Each week this podcast reads out loud a snapshot of topical articles from the National Seniors Newsletter on a range of topics covering health, finance, technology, lifestyle, and more.

<https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/nationalseniorsaustralia>



Dementia friendly communities initiative

People living with dementia and their carers often experience feelings of loneliness and social isolation, which unfortunately is further exacerbated by negative stereotypes held within the community toward dementia.

To help address this, the Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative was launched to build awareness and acceptance of dementia in the community through the development of inclusive activities that enable people living with dementia to live well.

As part of this program, their website lists a range of dementia-friendly organisations, events and activities to help people with dementia and their carers to remain engaged and connected to their communities.

Here's a quick look at some of the dementia-inclusive activities available on their website:

- Movie days
- Libraries
- Art galleries
- Men's Shed
- Swimming classes
- Community garden
- Forest and sensory trail
- Weekly social cafe programs
- Multicultural Reminiscing Garden



You can explore dementia-friendly community projects by clicking here:

<https://www.dementia.org.au/get-involved/dementia-friendly-communities/dementia-friendly-community-groups>

Listen to uplifting stories about the positive impact of dementia-friendly communities by clicking here:

<https://www.dementia.org.au/get-involved/dementia-friendly-communities/real-stories>

Product spotlight on kitchen safety: Innohome stove guard

Did you know that home fires most commonly start in the kitchen? And it turns out the majority of these are due to the stove being left unattended.

While smoke alarms are a critical part of all home safety, they aren't able to prevent fires from starting in the first place.

This is where the award-winning Innohome Stove Guard comes in. In the event of an emergency, their innovative sensor technology switches off the electricity to the stove *before* the fire has time to ignite.

It prevents a stove fire from starting even if no one is able to get to the stove.

Some of the other features include:

- Works silently in the background
- Doesn't require any action or technical knowledge
- Fits all electric stoves regardless of model or age
- Sensor operates continuously, with 10-year battery life
- Automatic cooktop shut-down with easy reset function

Innohome Stove Guard is available in Australia via this distributor:

<https://www.checkpointgroup.com.au/solutions/stove-guard-kitchen-cooktop-fire-protection/>

Specialised safety devices and assistive technologies can make a big difference to your home environment. We can help you to explore solutions to meet your assessed care needs relating to safety.

You can also download a free copy of the Home Safety Fire Booklet in 25 languages via this link:

<https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/home-fire-safety-booklet>



Are you at risk of a fall?

Nearly 1 in 3 older Australians have experienced a fall in the past 12 months and falls are the number one cause of unintentional injury in older people. Your home care package can assist you to maintain a safe environment and there are some simple measures you can put in place to help prevent falls and improve safety in and around your home environment. It's helpful for you to consider:

- **Your medications:** Ask your GP to review your prescription and non-prescription medications and other supplements for side effects or interactions that might increase your risk of falling
- **Your health conditions:** Ensure your vision and hearing are checked often, and let your GP know if you experience dizziness, pain, or mobility issues
- **Your footwear:** Floppy slippers, shoes with slippery soles, high or medium heels, and even wearing no shoes at all, can cause you to trip and fall
- **Your home environment:** Be mindful of trip hazards such as steps, rugs and uneven surfaces, keep frequently used items within easy reach, ensure good lighting, use non-slip mats, and keep walkways clear

If you experience a fall, regardless of whether you were injured or not, we will respond quickly and decisively to support you. Once the initial urgent event is over, we might recommend a referral to an Occupational Therapist, Falls & Balance Clinic, Podiatrist, GP, or other health professionals for advice and intervention. They may recommend special exercises and physical activity, and some practical things such as installing assistive devices like handrails, non-slip tread or tape, raised toilet seat, shower chair, safer footwear, installing sensor lighting and so on.

We will work with you to ensure your home care package can be used wherever possible to improve your safety, mobility and confidence at home. If you have any concerns, or if you are limiting your activities because you're worried about having a fall, please get in touch so we can assist you to get the right supports in place.



Common risk factors for falls


According to the Australian Government's 'Health Direct' resources, older people who don't keep physically active or fit tend to have poorer balance and weaker muscles, which increases the likelihood of them having a fall. Not eating well and not drinking enough water can also make it difficult for them to be strong enough to move about safely.

Other risk factors for a fall include:

- **A history of previous falls:** If you have fallen more than once in the past 6 months, you are more likely to fall again
- **Low blood pressure:** Older people with naturally low blood pressure may feel light-headed, dizzy or unsteady while moving
- **Incontinence:** You may need to hurry to the toilet often, increasing the risk of a fall, particularly at night
- **Stroke, Parkinson's disease and arthritis:** These conditions change the way you move, and make it harder to react quickly and stop yourself if you stumble
- **Diabetes:** Changes in blood sugar levels can make you feel faint. Diabetes can also affect your eyesight and reduce feeling in your feet and legs
- **Depression:** Older people with depression may take a medicine that can increase their risk of falling
- **Alzheimer's disease and other dementia:** Older persons with dementia can become less aware of their surroundings and less able to react quickly

If you are living with any of these risk factors, we will work with you to ensure your needs are well documented and strategies to support you are included in your care plan and budget.

Prevention of falls is a high priority and is a key factor in maintaining your independence at home. Please let us know if you have any concerns about potential falls risks and we will arrange to review your care and services as quickly as possible. 😊



**Nearly 2 out of 3
falls happen in and
around the home**

Taking temporary leave from your package

From time to time, you may be in a situation where you need to spend time away from home, and this can have implications for your home care package funding. This is known as 'temporary leave', and can include a hospital stay, transition care, residential respite and holiday/social leave.

The government has made it easy for you to take temporary leave from your package so you can continue receiving some important care and services if you need to.

While you're away **you can choose** whether or not you ask us to put your package on hold, by taking temporary leave. It is a bit confusing to think you can be away from home without having to put your package on hold, but the government allows this because sometimes consumers need to use their package funds to continue some services while they are not actually at home.

If you are away from home, it may be necessary or appropriate for some of your services to continue. This might be services such as:

- Garden or lawn maintenance
- Care management
- Social visits (in certain circumstances)
- Supporting you to have clean clothes (whilst in hospital)
- Transporting you to appointments whilst you're in respite care

Exception: You must take temporary leave if you are using the Transition Care Program following a hospital stay.

We will ensure your care plan is updated if you continue to receive services, and there are some formulas that relate to how daily care fees, care management fees and package management fees are charged when taking temporary leave. We will chat with you about that to make sure it's clear at the time.



Ageing with blindness or low vision

Did you know that about two-thirds of people who are blind or have low vision are over 65? These days, there are significant advances in technology, aids & equipment, funding, services and strategies to help reduce the impact that blindness or low vision can have on day-to-day life and enjoyment.

We want to be sure that Support Workers and others involved in your care know how best to assist you, so it's important that we hear about your needs and preferences during our assessment phase.

There are many ways that Support Workers can assist you, such as:

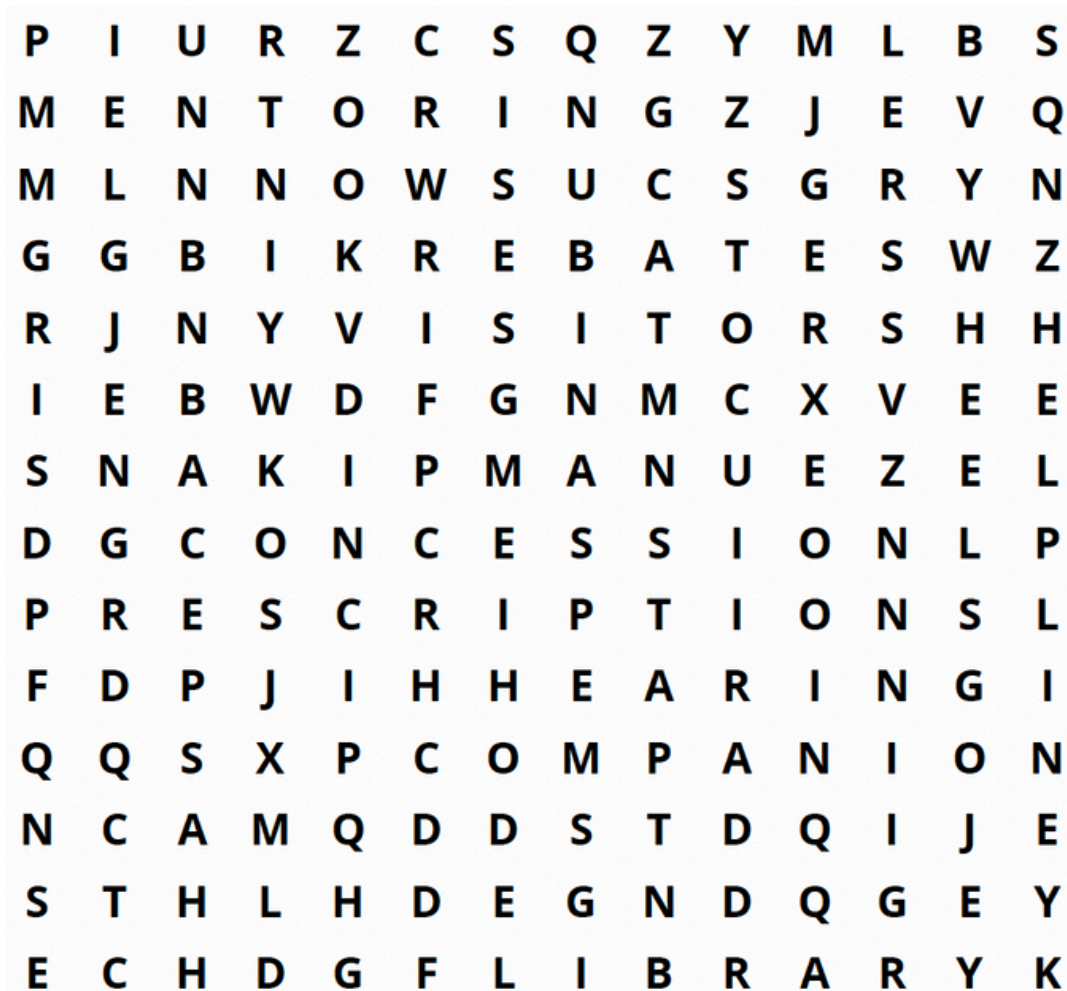
- Identify themselves by name and not assume you recognise their voice
- Speak naturally and clearly – without yelling or being patronising
- Avoid situations where there is competing noise or poor lighting
- Ask first if you need help, rather than assuming that you do
- Offer their arm for you to hold, and walk slightly ahead of you at a comfortable pace
- Guide you to your chair, sofa or bed, so you can safely and independently seat yourself

Usually, our clients with vision impairment are already very aware of how to keep safe around their local community, and in their home and garden, and we will work with you to ensure you feel safe and secure wherever you are.

Please let us know if you have any concerns about your vision and we can help you to access the right services and supports. Talk to us about how your package can be used to take advantage of the aids, equipment and technologies designed specifically for people living with low vision and blindness.



Word Search: Helpful free and low cost services



Find the 12 hidden words by searching for only the words in bold

- **Taxi** card • home **library** services • **concession** card • Meals on **Wheels**
- free **hearing** aids • **Seniors** card • technology **mentoring** • **Companion** card
- Community **Visitors** Scheme • National Dementia **Helpline**
- energy concessions and **rebates** • electronic **prescriptions**

