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Aging in Place: Growing Older at Home

Many people want the same things as they get older: to stay in their own homes, to maintain independence for as long as possible, and to turn to family and friends for help when needed. Staying in your own home as you get older is called “aging in place.” But many older adults and their families have concerns about safety, getting around, or other daily activities. Living at home as you age requires careful consideration and planning. This article offers suggestions to help you find the help you need to continue to live independently.

Planning ahead for aging in place

The best time to think about how to

age in place is before you need a lot of care. Planning ahead allows you to make important decisions while you are still able.

The first step is to think about the kinds of help you need now and might want in the future. You can learn about home-based care and other services in your community and find out what they cost. Planning ahead also gives you time to set up your home to meet your needs as you age.

Another step is to consider any illnesses, such as diabetes, Parkinsons or heart disease, that you or your spouse might have. Find out about how the illness could make it hard for someone to get

around or take care of themselves in the future. Your health care provider can help answer your questions.

Talk with your family, friends, and other caregivers about what support is needed for you to stay in your home. Be realistic and plan to revisit the decision as your needs change over time.

Support for aging at home

Home-based care includes health, personal, and other support services to help you stay at home and live as independently as possible. In-home services may be short-term — for someone who is recovering from an operation, for example — or long-term, for people who need ongoing help.

In many cases, home-based support is provided at home by informal caregivers, such as family members, friends, and neighbors. It can also be supplemented by formal caregivers and community services.

Help you can receive at home includes:

- **Personal care:** Help with everyday activities, also called “activities of daily living,” including bathing, dressing, grooming, using the toilet, eating, and moving around — for example, getting out of bed and into a chair
- **Household chores:** Housecleaning, yard work, grocery shopping, laundry, and similar chores around the house
- **Meals:** Shopping for food and preparing nutritious meals
- **Money management:** Tasks such as paying bills and filling out health insurance forms
- **Health care:** Help with many aspects of health care, including giving medications, caring for wounds, helping with medical equipment, and providing physical therapy
- **Transportation:** Assistance getting around, such as rides to the doctor’s office or grocery store
- **Safety:** Home safety features and help in case of a fall or other emergency

Making your home safe and accessible

There are a variety of ways to make your surroundings safer and easier to

manage so they meet your needs as you age. Go through your home room by room to identify potential problems and safety issues. First, correct any immediate dangers, such as loose stair railings and poor lighting, and then work on other ways to ensure you will be as safe as possible at home.

Are you worried that making changes might be expensive? You may be able to get help paying for repairs and safety updates to your home. Check with your state housing finance agency, social services department, community development groups, or the federal government for financial aid programs and discounts.

Resources for aging in place

If staying in your home is important to you, you may have concerns about getting around, being safe, and staying connected. Some of these activities become more challenging as you age. The resources below can help you find solutions.

Reach out to people you know. Family, friends, and neighbors are the biggest source of help for many older people. They may be able to drive you to doctor’s appointments, help with errands and chores, or just keep you company. Talk with those close to you about the best way to get what you need. If you are physically able, think about trading services with a friend or neighbor. For example, one could do the grocery shopping, and the other could cook dinner.

Learn about community resources. Your local Area Agency on Aging, local and state offices on aging or social services, or your tribal organization may have lists of services. These organizations will be familiar with resources available in your community and may have tips for accessing them. Health care providers and social workers may also have suggestions. If you belong to a religious community, find out whether it offers services for older adults or ask for guidance from your pastor, rabbi, or other religious leader.

Get help during the day. Support is available if your regular caregiver isn’t available during the day (for example,

because they go to work). Some organizations have volunteers who regularly pay short visits to older adults. The volunteer can provide support, assistance, and companionship. Or you might consider an adult day care program, which can offer social activities, exercise, meals, and personal care during the day. Additionally, respite services provide short-term care for an older adult at home when a regular caregiver isn't available.

Be prepared for a medical emergency. If you have a serious allergy or medical need, talk with your doctor about whether you should get a medical alert ID bracelet or necklace. You might also consider an emergency medical alert system, which responds to medical and other emergencies via an electronic monitor that a person wears. The monitor alerts

emergency personnel when a person becomes lost, falls, or needs urgent medical assistance.

Talk to a geriatric care manager. These specially trained professionals can help find resources to make your daily life easier. They will work with you to form a care plan and find services you need. Geriatric care managers can be especially helpful when family members live far apart. Your doctor or other health care provider may be able to recommend a geriatric care manager, or you can contact the Aging Life Care Association for a list of these professionals in your area.

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How Much Will It Cost to Age in Place?

An important part of planning is thinking about how you are going to pay for the help you need. Home-based services can be expensive, but they may cost less than moving into a residential facility, such as assisted living or a nursing home.

How people pay for care depends on their financial situation, their eligibility for assistance programs, and the kinds of services they use. People often rely on a variety of payment sources, including:

Personal funds, including savings, a pension or other retirement fund,

income from investments, or proceeds from the sale of a home.

Federal and state government programs, such as Medicare, Medicaid, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Visit [Benefits.gov](https://www.benefits.gov) for more information about government programs for health care and financial assistance.

Private financing, including long-term care insurance, reverse mortgages, certain life insurance policies, annuities, and trusts.

When it's time to leave home

Most people prefer to stay in their own home for as long as possible. But there may come a time when it's no longer safe or comfortable to live alone.

The decision about whether and

when an older adult should move from their home is often difficult and emotional. Everyone will have their own reasons for wanting (or not wanting) to take such a step. One person may decide a move is right because they can't or don't want to manage the home any longer. For another person, the need for regular, hands-on care motivates a change.

Learn as much as you can about the housing options available as you grow older. Talk with your family about the pros and cons of each option before making a decision.

You may also be interested in:

- Learning about services for older adults living at home
- Finding out the signs that an older



Ways for Seniors to Remain Active

Physical activity is good for people of all ages, especially seniors. It can reduce your risk of chronic health conditions, and improve your mood, strength and balance.

Seniors should aim for 2½ hours of moderate-intensity exercise per week. Achieving this can be a challenge

during the winter's cold, dark days. In addition, COVID-19 guidelines have led to more time spent at home and restricted access to some previously available indoor spaces.

Even with these challenges, seniors can do many things to remain active during inclement weather.

adult needs help

- Reading more about residential care facilities

For more information on aging in place

Eldercare Locator

800-677-1116

eldercarelocator@USAgings.org

<https://eldercare.acl.gov>

LongTermCare.gov

202-619-0724

aclinfo@acl.hhs.gov

<https://acl.gov/ltc>

Medicaid

877-267-2323

866-226-1819 (TTY)

Medicaid.gov@cms.hhs.gov

www.medicaid.gov

Medicare

800-633-4227 (1-800-MEDICARE)

877-486-2048 (TTY)

www.medicare.gov

USAgings

202-872-0888

info@uasging.org

www.usaging.org

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Here are some tips to get you started:

Find resources at a public library.

Most public libraries have a wide selection of exercise videos, books and e-books that focus on low-impact movement.

Attend a virtual fitness class.

Today's seniors are more connected than ever. Use of technology has grown during the COVID-19 pandemic, with more use of virtual technology to connect with friends and family.

Why not use the same technology to participate in an exercise class? Local fitness clubs, and county aging and disability resource centers offer low-impact virtual classes or one-on-one training services using Zoom or other virtual technology.

Check with your health insurance company about virtual fitness class coverage, as some plans pay for some or all of class expenses.

Follow an online video.

There are thousands of exercise videos online, but don't just scan through social media sites and try to complete the first workout you find. Search for exercise programs specifically created

for seniors, and incorporate stretching, strengthening and low-impact cardio. This may include chair yoga, seated strengthening exercises or chair stretching.

Schedule movement into your day.

A body at rest tends to stay at rest. This is especially true when the weather outdoors is bad.

Plan a specific time each day to move. Many people find it best to complete a workout in the morning when they feel the freshest and the day hasn't gotten away from them.

You can incorporate additional movement throughout your day, such as completing 10 squats while preparing lunch or coffee, putting away laundry one item at a time to walk extra steps, march in place during commercial breaks of your favorite TV show or getting up out of your chair every hour to walk a short distance in your home. Try these 15-minute workouts you can do at home.

Use what you have.

You don't need expensive fitness equipment at home to get a total body workout.

Consider these examples:

- Use cans of soup or water bottles as hand weights.
- Go from a sitting to a standing position out of a dining room chair two to three times in a row instead of just once.
- Walk up and down a hallway or large open space.
- Go up and down your stairs multiple times.
- Turn up the music and dance in your kitchen.

Get outdoors.

Weather can be unpredictable, but with the proper preparation and equipment, seniors can safely enjoy exercising outdoors. On days when it is hot or there is inclement weather and you do not need to go anywhere, stay inside to prevent falls.

When venturing out, remember these tips:

- Wear proper footwear.
- Wear a pair of lightweight tennis shoes or boots with good support. Take your time.
- Walks in winter are not a race, and there is no need to hurry. Take small steps, and watch for, and avoid, icy spots.
- Walk with a friend.
- Catch up with a friend while exercising.
- Make sure you drink enough water.

Incorporate variety.

People tend to focus on only one type of exercise, such as walking. Variety in your routines, incorporating five elements of fitness, reduces boredom and lowers the risk of injury.

Try to incorporate these types of

exercise into your routines:

Endurance

These activities increase your breathing and heart rates. Examples include dancing, climbing stairs and brisk walking.

Strength

Strong muscles help seniors remain independent and make everyday activities easier. Examples include lifting weights and using resistance bands.

Balance

These activities reduce the risk of falls. Examples include standing with your feet next to each other, standing on one foot and then the other, and tai chi.

Flexibility

Flexibility improves your joints' range of motion and makes daily tasks easier. Chair yoga and stretching can improve flexibility.

If you have heart disease, diabetes, a history of falls, vertigo or other chron-

ic health conditions, talk with your healthcare provider about the types and amount of physical activity that is right for you.

Don't view the weather as an excuse to stop exercising. There still are many things that you can do to safely incorporate exercise and movement into your routine. Learn more from the National Institute on Aging.

A body at rest tends to stay at rest. This is especially true when the weather outdoors is bad. Plan a specific time each day to move. Many people find it best to complete a workout in the morning when they feel the freshest and the day hasn't gotten away from them.

Kelly Carlson is a physical therapist in Fairmont, Minnesota.



Dear clients, near and far,
 You've seen our care and know who we are.
 If our service made your days bright,
 Please leave a review; it feels so right!
 Head to Google and share your view,
 Your kind words help us serve more like you.
 Thanks for your time and for spreading cheer,
 Your support means the world, it's crystal clear!



Step 1: Log into your Google Account

Step 2: Google Independent You, Senior Services

Step 3: Go to the right-hand side of the screen (on desktop) or scroll down (on mobile) and click on "Write a Review" below our listing.

Step 4: Click the star to the far right to leave a five-star review, and in the experience box, leave a message about why you love our services.

Step 5: Click Post – All done!



CAREGIVER OF THE MONTH

Independent You is committed to providing compassionate and high-quality care for our clients. We believe that our success is rooted in our caregivers that continue to exemplify patience, empathy, and respect towards their clients.

Our Caregiver of the Month award is given to a caregiver who exemplifies dedication, compassion and excellence in their role.

We would like to congratulate our February Caregiver of the Month, **Manso D.** His commitment to his profession shines through in his interactions as he treats his clients with respect and kindness.

We also congratulate **Lemlem A.** as our Caregiver of the Month for April. She embodies the highest standard of caregiving and always has the client's best interest at heart.

We would like to thank both **Manso** and **Lemlem** for always ensuring the well-being and comfort of those under their care. We extend our sincere appreciation for their hard work and dedication. We are fortunate to have them as part of our team at Independent You.





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