

KENDAL[®] *at Home*

Together, transforming the experience of aging.[®]

AVOIDING Nursing Homes

Your Guide to Aging in Place



By 2030, it's [estimated](#) adults 65 and over will make up 20 percent of the US population.

If you were to ask what's most important to them as they age, chances are they'd tell you to remain in their homes for as long as possible. In fact, research reveals just that: 90 percent of older adults want to stay in their homes as they age.

If you're like most older adults, you've likely seen the nursing home environment up close, having cared for an aging family member or friend. You know it's not what you want, and you might be wondering if it's really possible to avoid it. Though it may not seem like it, the answer is a resounding 'yes.'

Your home is your place of comfort. You've invested time and money making it into something special — *a place for family, friends and pets.*



For Connie, she didn't want to give up what she loved about her home and community just because she was aging.

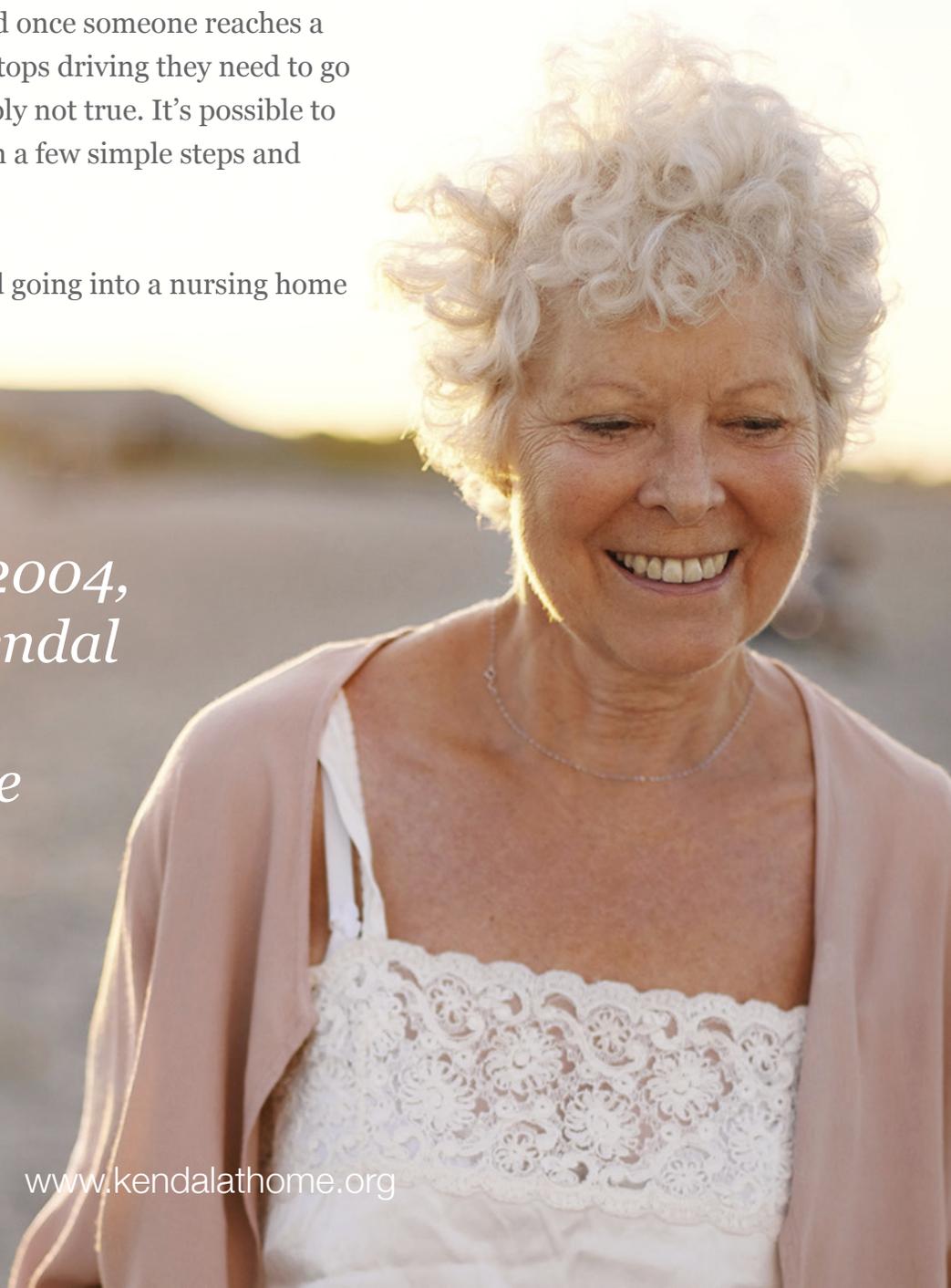
"We have a three bedroom, two bath home with a beautiful sun room and our own garden, and we can't have all those things if we're some place like that. We're going to be in a room or two," she explained.

You shouldn't have to leave your home due to your age.

But traditionally, it's widely assumed once someone reaches a certain age, has trouble walking or stops driving they need to go into a nursing home, and that's simply not true. It's possible to remain in your home as you age with a few simple steps and support from family or friends.

We explore what you can do to avoid going into a nursing home in the following pages.

Since opening in 2004, only one out of Kendal at Home's 250+ members has gone into a permanent nursing home.



Most Older Adults Don't Need to go into a Nursing Home

When most people think of nursing homes, they think of depressing, medicinal-smelling settings with residents sitting around waiting to die. While these facilities serve a purpose for those who really need them, it's unlikely many older adults will.

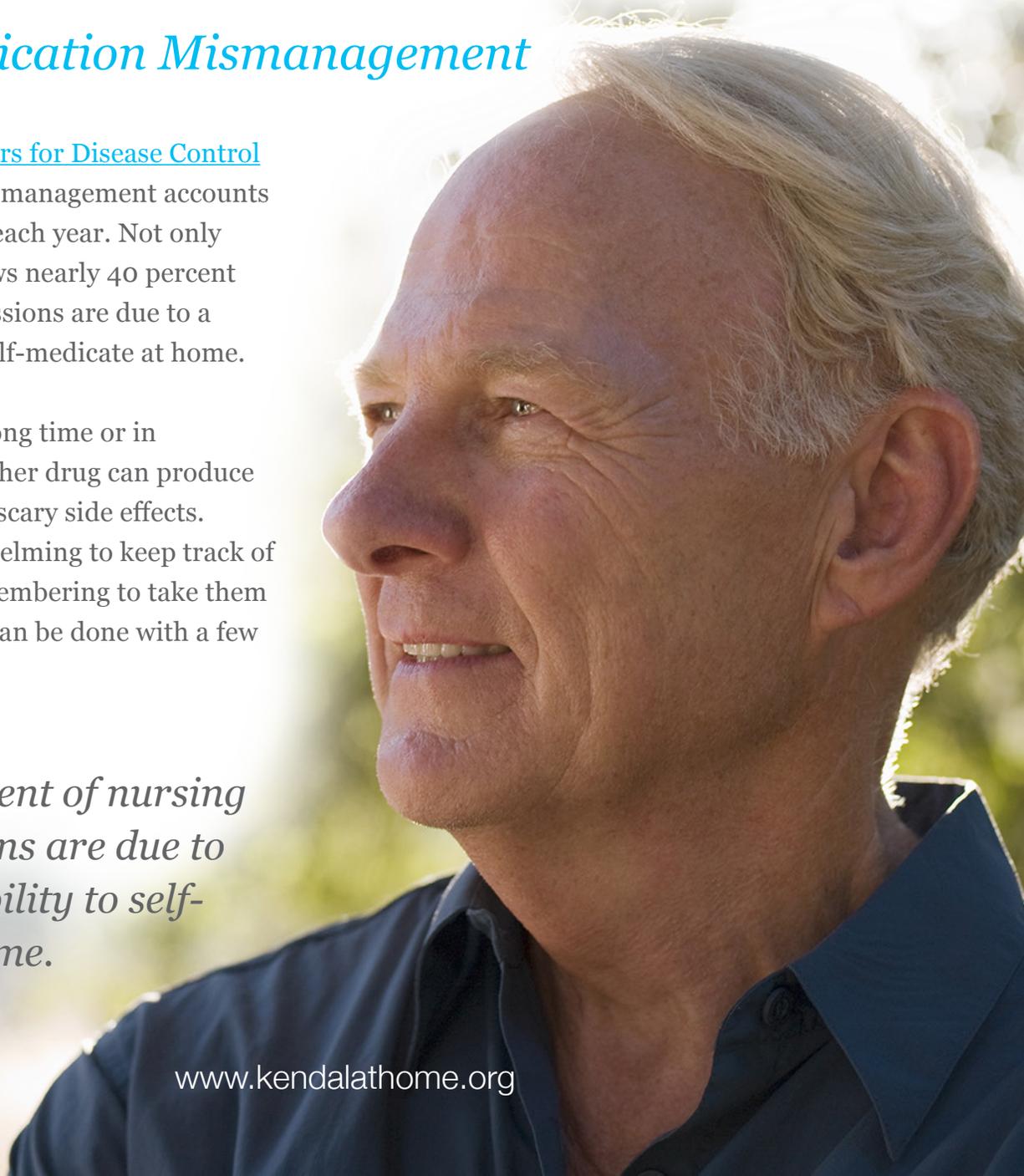
Things that usually land people in a nursing home — medication mismanagement, limited mobility, forgetfulness — can be remedied with a few modifications at home. These can come in the form of home improvements, support from family friends or support from an outside caregiver.

Handle Medication Mismanagement

According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC), medication mismanagement accounts for 700,000 ER visits each year. Not only that, but research shows nearly 40 percent of nursing home admissions are due to a patient's inability to self-medicate at home.

Taking a pill at the wrong time or in combination with another drug can produce unwanted, sometimes scary side effects. While it can be overwhelming to keep track of your medications, remembering to take them and at the right time, can be done with a few simple fixes.

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Tips for Managing Medications

- **Keeping an up to date list of the names of your medications and the dosage.** Make sure the list also includes any over the counter medicines or supplements.
- **Taking your medication list to your doctor or pharmacy.** This can help pinpoint any inaccuracies or potential interactions.
- **Using only one pharmacy.** This helps minimize problems by having a record of all your medications in one place. Talk to your pharmacist about potential side effects or interactions.
- **Hiring help.** If you need it, it's possible to hire someone to come to your home to ensure you're taking your medications correctly.
- **Asking questions.** Ask your physician what the medicine is used for and if it's related to any medicines you're currently taking.
- **Getting a pill organizer.** Pill organizers — those little boxes with compartments marked for each day of the week — can help simplify the medication taking process. If you find you need help, ask a family member, friend or neighbor for help organizing everything.



Make Home Modifications

The National Institute of Health [reports](#) more than one in three people age 65 and older have fallen. What's more, injuries sustained during a fall are the leading cause of loss of independence. Fortunately, some basic home modifications can help reduce these risks and ensure you stay independent as long as possible.

Possible Home Modifications to Prevent Falls

- **Pick up the Throw Rugs:** While throw rugs can spruce up a living space, they also pose a fall risk. Their unsecured edges combined with their ability to slide, make throw rugs easy to trip over. If you'd like to keep your rugs, make sure the edges are taped down and the rug is secured to the floor.
- **Install Grab Bars:** Installing a few grab bars in your bath or shower ensures your safety when getting into or leaving the tub. Several home improvement stores now offer aesthetically pleasing options if you're worried about how they will affect the look of your bathroom.
- **Consider a Different Location for Your Utility Room:** If possible, consider moving your washer and dryer upstairs where you'll have less ground to cover while carrying laundry. If you can't move appliances upstairs, think about making a centralized utility room where the laundry facilities and other items can be easily accessible.
- **Add an Extra Rail:** If you have a two-story home, adding an extra railing so there are two on either side of the stairwell can help prevent falls and help you more easily scale the stairs.

The National Association of Homebuilders has an [extensive checklist](#) of modifications to consider.

It's also helpful to create a resource list and share it with family or friends. For example, do you have a trustworthy repairman? Someone to help you mow the lawn? A trusted dog kennel? If you're hospitalized or away from home, your family or friends will know who takes care of what.

Choose the Right Physician

Having an open and trusted relationship with your doctor is a vital component to remaining independent. If you're searching for a different physician, consider a geriatrician. These doctors are specially trained to meet the needs of older adults, and have expertise where a family physician may not.

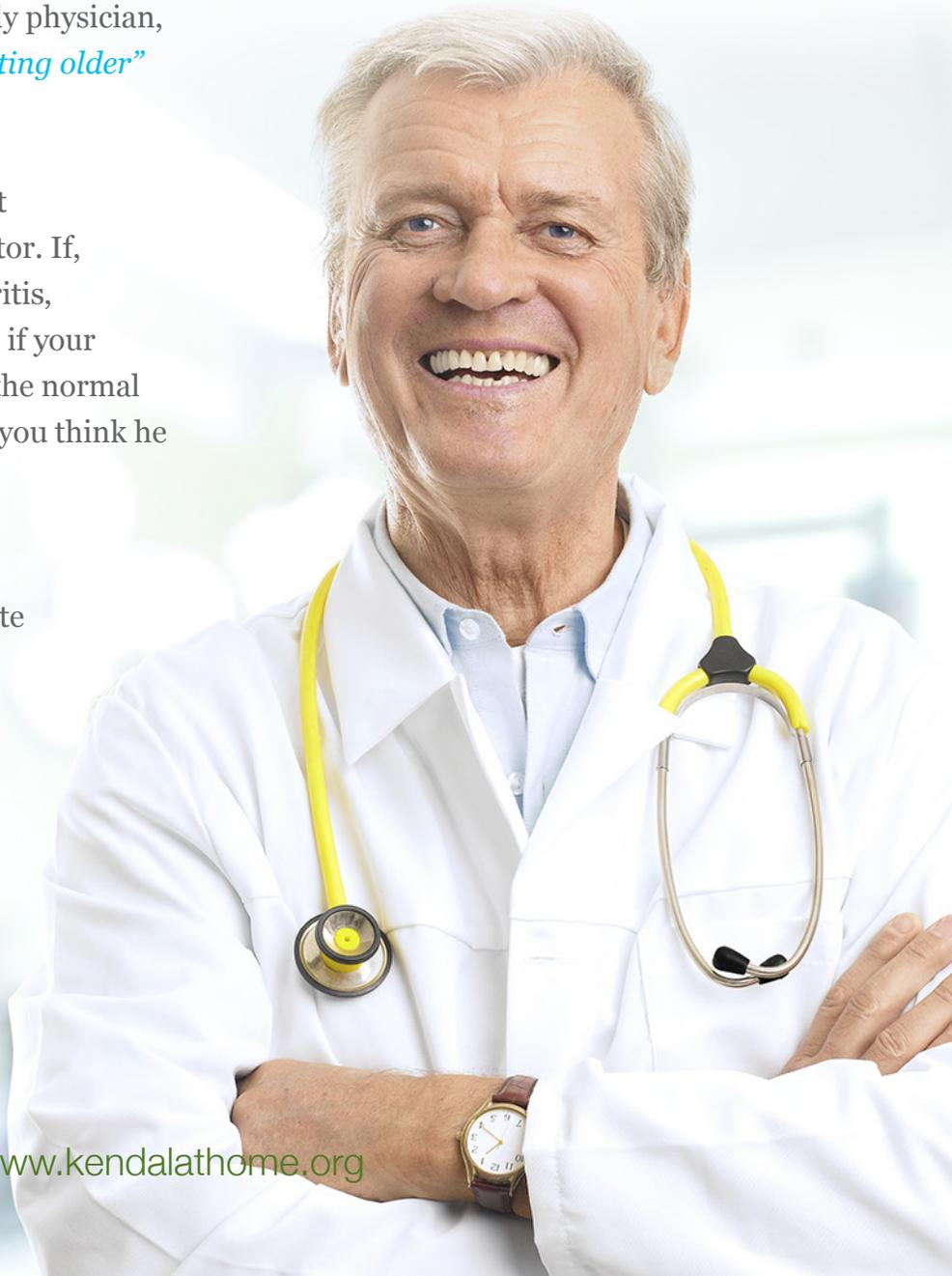
Geriatricians are also more up-to-date on issues affecting older adults and more in-tune with the resources available to them. Speak to friends who have seen geriatricians. Ask about their experience and how much time they give you during appointments. You can usually find geriatricians through your local hospital system, or by contacting your senior resource center.

Whether you see a geriatrician or a family physician, *don't accept "It's just because you're getting older" as an answer.*

If you're having pain or other unpleasant symptoms, bring them up with your doctor. If, for example, you're struggling with arthritis, ask for a referral to a rheumatologist. Or if your physician writes off your symptoms as "the normal course of aging," get a second opinion if you think he or she is incorrect.

If you bring someone with you to your appointments, he or she can also advocate for you when discussing care. It's important to remember you don't have to accept a lower quality of life because you're aging.

Ultimately, it comes down to finding a physician who will listen to you, give you the respect you deserve, and respect that you want to stay in your home.



Be Your Own Advocate

Sometimes it's not only necessary for you to be your own advocate at the doctor's office, but with family and friends, as well. Your daughter might be worried because you've reached a certain age, and she'd feel more comfortable if you were in a nursing home setting, or your friend might get worried you've stopped driving.

Just like it does with your doctor, an open dialogue plays an important role in communicating your desires to family and friends. If your family, friends or doctor are pushing for you to enter a nursing home, explain that you understand their concerns and ask what concerns they have about your safety. Then reiterate your desire to stay in your home. A lot of issues — like medication mismanagement or falls — can be corrected with a few in-home modifications or help from outside sources.

Get a Little Help from Your Friends

Start relying on your circle of friends for more than just lunch dates or shopping outings. Friends can be an integral part of staying independent by helping you meet your socialization and emotional needs. If you've stopped driving, for instance, let your friends know and ask them to pick you up on their next shopping trip or when they go to the ballgame.

If you don't have any family in your area, make sure your network of friends knows your wishes and that you want to remain in your home. Looking to make new friends? Enroll in art classes, attend church services, or meet new people at your local senior center.



Keep Moving — Physically and Mentally

Staying active is an important component to remaining healthy, and it can also help you avoid a nursing home. Have a plan — continue to challenge yourself through a hobby, an exercise program, volunteering, or a part time job.

Recent medical research found physically active older adults may be protecting themselves against small areas of brain damage that could affect movement ability.

Examples of physical activity include:

- Tai Chi
- Balance Work
- Yoga
- Supervised Weight Training

When it comes to challenging your brain, it's much more than just doing crossword puzzles. Get involved in your community, volunteer, or learn a new instrument.



Be Aware of Your Mental Health

When it comes to mental health in older adults, many think about dementia or Alzheimer's, but older adults are at an increased risk for depression, which can lead to hospitalization or entering a nursing home, if left untreated. The CDC [estimates](#) between 1 and 5 percent of those living in a community experience depression. This number rises to between 11 and 13 percent for those who require home health care or long term hospital patients.

Depression is more than feeling sad or just going through a rough patch, [according](#) to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. A depressive episode changes how a person functions. If you experience any of the following symptoms or know someone who is, get help from a doctor or counselor.

Depression symptoms may include:

- Trouble sleeping or sleeping more than usual
- Lack of interest in things you used to enjoy
- Lack of concentration or inability to make decisions
- Hopelessness
- Low self esteem

Nearly 90 percent of people age 65 and older want to stay in their homes as they age. Kendal at Home makes this possible.



Use a Senior Resource Center

Senior resource centers are an often overlooked resource you can use for a variety of needs. [According](#) to the National Council on Aging, senior centers serve more than 1 million older adults every day.

These centers can help you stay healthy and independent by offering programs such as:

- Meal and nutrition programs
- Information and assistance
- Health screenings and wellness programs
- Transportation services
- Employment assistance
- Volunteer and civic engagement opportunities
- Social and recreational activities

And, research has shown those who participate in senior center programs can manage and delay the onset of chronic diseases while experiencing a measurable improvement in their physical, social, and mental wellbeing.

Keeping the above points in mind, along with support from family or friends, can allow you to successfully age in place and retain your independence. Aging in place can take many forms, and success is determined by what you deem it to be.

This information is presented by Kendal at Home, a unique program that enables you to age in place with the security you and your family desire. We have been able to help our members remain healthy and independent by providing a continuum of care as well as taking advantage of the latest technology advances that promote aging in place. Since opening in 2004, only one of Kendal at Home's 250+ members has gone to a nursing home facility.

To learn more about how Kendal at Home members are successfully aging in place,

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