



Your Guide to Finding and Choosing Long-Term Care



Finding a long-term care community for your senior loved one can be complicated. In this guide, we'll break down the stages of finding long-term care for your loved one, including:

- Noticing the signs that it's needed.
- Talking about it with your family members.
- How much it will cost.
- How to find the right option for your loved one.

A note to remember: *Many communities use the terms skilled nursing, long-term care, or nursing home interchangeably. They all mean the same thing - a place for people who need help with several daily functions as well as professional medical care.*

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Does My Loved One Need Long-Term Care?

One thing you've noticed over the past few weeks was your mother's rapidly declining health. She doesn't drive anymore, needs help taking her medications, and is beginning to have trouble walking.

Does this mean she needs to move to a long-term care community?

Signs Your Loved One Needs Long-Term Care

Long-term care is a place for people who need help with daily functions as well as professional medical care.

A single sign, such as forgetting to return a phone call or missing an appointment, doesn't mean that your loved one is ready to move into skilled nursing. Rather, a clear pattern of diminished physical or mental abilities is what you should watch for.

Inability to Manage Responsibilities

Daily life requires us to juggle all kinds of things - appointments, phone calls, bills, money management, and more.

People of any age are bound to forget things at times, so don't be worried if this happens once or twice with your loved one.

However, if they're having trouble remembering to pay bills each month, can't make it to important appointments, or seem overwhelmed, take note.



Declining Physical Health and Abilities

This is one of the most obvious signs to look for. You'll notice this if your loved one has trouble getting around, keeping themselves and their home clean, or feeding themselves.

If you're still not sure where your loved one falls on this spectrum, try using a tool like the [Katz Index of Independence in Activities of Daily Living](#). The lower the score, the more help your loved one will require so they can function each day.

Loneliness and Social Isolation

Seniors may feel lonely or isolated for a variety of reasons. Perhaps their spouse has passed away, family and friends no longer live close by, or they can't drive themselves anymore.

Staying socially active and maintaining strong relationships is critical to staying healthy - not just mentally or emotionally, but physically. If your loved one spends most of their time alone or doesn't participate in social activities as they once did, it could be a sign that it's time for a change.



Consider Your Own Ability to Help

If you or other family members are able to provide the care your loved one needs on a daily basis, you may be able to delay them moving to skilled nursing. But if you don't live close by, can't get time off to help, or are financially unable to provide care, this won't be an option.

The University of Connecticut Health Center's medical director for senior health, Dr. Patrick Coll, told U.S. News & World Report, "There's a lot of responsibility that comes with being a primary caregiver for someone who has a particular disability or illness. That can have an impact on the caregiver's own health; their finances; the relationship they have with others in their family."

Make sure you consider these things as you decide which option you need to pursue.

