WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SENIOR CARE?

We'll help explain the various options.

As you start to look for senior care options, you may become overwhelmed by the vast amount of care types and styles of senior living communities. In order to help as you embark on this journey, we've summarized the different choices for senior care, as well as the related advantages and disadvantages of each. With more knowledge and insight, you'll find the best path for finding ideal care for you or a loved one.

Adult Day Care

Often families decide to care for aging parents or loved ones while still needing to go to work or attend to other daytime commitments. If either physical or memory impairments are such that the senior may not do well at home alone during the day, adult day care can prove helpful. These day programs offer enriching social activities and structured programming, as well as the opportunity to interact with peers.

This type of care provides a protective setting throughout the daytime hours with individuals returning home in the evening, perhaps even offering therapeutic or rehabilitative services such as occupational or physical therapy.

Also known as: Adult Day Services, Senior Day Programs, Respite Care

Advantages

- Provides assistance break to caregivers who need to work or have other needs to attend to.
- Offers socialization with other seniors and provides activities, helping to decrease loneliness and reduce risk for depression.

Disadvantages

- May not offer the required care for seniors with more severe health or memory problems.
- Individuals must be brought to and from the center each day, which may be inconvenient for seniors and/or family caregivers.

Assisted Living

Assisted living is used to describe a type of residential community for seniors providing living quarters, support services and health care designed to aid individuals who need support with day-to-day routines. Usually, these services include a combination of meals, laundry, housekeeping, medication management and assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) such as bathing, grooming, toileting and moving around. Seniors in assisted living communities generally have their own apartment residence on campus with community spaces for dining and activities.

Also known as: Assisted Care Community, Personal Care Home

Advantages

- Residents live in individual apartments, choosing how to spend their time and participating independently in activities and programming.
- Provides consistent care and support with daily activities such as bathing, dressing, medication, transportation and meal preparation.

Disadvantages

- Can be expensive, particularly without assets such as a home and retirement savings, or long-term care insurance coverage.
- May be opposed by seniors who are attached to staying in their own house.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities

Continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs) offer a lifetime continuum of care, ranging from fully independent homes to assisted living apartments, to nursing facilities or memory care residences. Through multiple levels of care and accommodations, CCRCs are designed to meet the needs of seniors as they age and as their needs change.

The varied housing options provide a continuum of housing, support services and health care, commonly all on one campus where residents can move between levels of care as needed.

Also referred to as: Continuing Care Facilities, Life Care Communities, Multi-Level Care Communities, Retirement Communities, Senior Living Communities

Advantages

- Does not require time, research or additional expenses when a change in care or living accommodations is needed.
- Provides a smooth transition and priority admittance if care needs change.

Disadvantages

- Can be expensive; the community's contract options and financial arrangements must be considered.
- Might not make use of multiple levels of care, incurring unnecessary costs.

Family Caregiving

Some families choose to have a senior loved one live with them in their home or the home of another family member for as long as possible, assuming that this type of at-home care will be less expensive and more comfortable for their loved one. When looking into this arrangement, several concerns should be addressed, including how family relationships will be affected, whether the living quarters can be adapted appropriately, how finances will be managed, and what kinds of care and personal assistance the family member will need, now and in the future.

Also known as: Home Care by a Family Member

Advantages

- Gives families the opportunity to spend extra time with their loved one.
- Provides seniors the benefit of familiar surroundings with relatives nearby.

Disadvantages

- Does not allow seniors the chance to spend time with peers or engage in activities.
- Can be difficult for family members, depending on their work situation and other variables.

Home Health Care

The provision of medical and nursing services in an individual's home by a licensed provider or professional is known as home health care. This type of care usually entails providing help with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) such as bathing, dressing, medication management and meal preparation. Home health care may also include other services like transportation, paying bills, making appointments and providing company to seniors.

Ranging from once a week to 24 hours a day, home health care can allow seniors to stay in their own homes while receiving the assistance according to their needs.

Also known as: Home Care Aide, In-Home Care

Advantages

- Allows flexibility for seniors to determine their daily schedule and activities.
- Can be arranged with varied hours to accommodate the needs of the senior and their family.

Disadvantages

- Lacks the socialization and programming that a community can provide.
- Finding caregivers and scheduling care can be a hardship to family members.

Hospice Care

As an overall approach to the care and comfort provided to those with terminal illnesses at end of life, hospice care typically is provided in-home or at a specialized center or hospital, depending on the preferences of the patient and their family. This includes palliative care to alleviate the individual's symptoms rather than taking lifesaving measures, as well as counseling and social services for the individual and their family to attend to their emotional and spiritual needs.

Also referred to as: End of Life Care

Advantages

- Helps patients and their families to focus on emotional, spiritual and practical concerns at end of life.
- Seniors and their families can make their remaining days together more peaceful and meaningful with the help of hospice care providers.

Disadvantages

- Can be expensive; however, some or all of the costs may be covered by insurance or contributed through charity donations.
- Some families and patients refuse to acknowledge the end of life is near and thus do not benefit from hospice care.

Independent Living

Independent living is a community setting for seniors who have the physical and mental capacity to live independently, requiring minimal assistance. Most independent living residences provide options for services such as meals, housekeeping, social activities and transportation and promote an active, healthy senior lifestyle.

Typically offering a variety of apartment sizes or even freestanding villas, these communities are ideal for seniors with few medical problems and the ability to care for themselves. With maintenance, housekeeping, meal preparation and other services provided by the community's staff, residents often find their active lifestyle is enhanced by having more time to pursue interests, friendships and recreation.

Also referred to as: 55+ Communities, Congregate Care, Retirement Communities, Retirement Villages, Senior Apartments, Senior Living Communities

Advantages

- Give opportunities for socializing with peers through planned programming and shared spaces.
- Freedom and flexibility is maintained.

Disadvantages

- Does not provide medical care, unless part of continuing care retirement community.
- Senior must trade their familiar home and neighborhood for unfamiliar territory.

Memory Care

Memory care is a distinct form of residential senior care designed to meet the specific needs of individuals with Alzheimer's disease, dementia or other memory impairments. Often offered in continuing care communities, memory care provides specialized on-site services, activities and events dedicated to memory improvement in a safe and physically secured environment.

It's not unusual for family caregivers to struggle with caring for their loved ones with dementia or Alzheimer's at home, due to the tremendous time commitment and particular resources required. In these cases, a memory care community can provide the expertise needed to manage memory impairment, as well as structured programming and 24-hour support to give the utmost quality of life.

Also referred to as: Alzheimer's Care, Dementia Care, Memory Support

Advantages

- Offers meaningful activities and structured programming for memory improvement and overall well-being.
- A specialized support team can create a treatment plan along with family members and work toward improving quality of life.

Disadvantages

- Caregivers may feel guilt and anxiety about moving their loved one to a facility away from home.
- Seniors may express a strong desire to stay in their familiar home environment.

Palliative Care

Although palliative care often accompanies hospice care, it is not the same. This medical specialty focuses on relief of pain, stress and other debilitating symptoms of serious illness. The goal is to relieve suffering and provide the best possible quality of life for patients and their families. A treatment plan customized for each patient, palliative care relieves symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, constipation, nausea, loss of appetite and difficulty sleeping. It is often administered at the same time as a treatment meant to cure the patient. Most hospitals, long-term care and skilled nursing communities offer palliative care.

Advantages

- Hospice nurses can greatly help a person and his or her family come to terms with the impending death, and make the most of their remaining days together.

Disadvantages

- The cost can be prohibitive although some or all of the cost may be covered by insurance or even donated through various charities.
- Some families and patients aren't ready to acknowledge that they are terminally ill and so are unable to take advantage of hospice care.

Respite Care

Temporary care services that are used when an individual's usual caregiver needs a temporary relief from their duties are known as respite care. Ranging from several hours to days, these services may be provided as in-home assistance, short nursing home stays or adult day care.

Since caregivers for senior family members rarely have time for breaks or getaways, the use of respite care allows them to take time off from caregiving duties while knowing that their loved one is safe and cared for. A support team provides medical care and can even help seniors become acquainted with a particular facility if considering a transition from living at home.

Also referred to as: Adult Day Care, Short-Term Stay Programs

Advantages

- Prevents caregiver burnout and helps ease tension.
- Improves seniors' well-being with both health care services and life-enrichment activities.

Disadvantages

- Taking a break may cause caregivers to feel guilt and anxiety.
- Seniors may be uneasy or overwhelmed about spending time in an unfamiliar place.

Skilled Nursing Care

Skilled nursing care is a category of residential care for seniors that provides around-the-clock skilled care for individuals who generally need assistance for most or all Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). Generally thought of as one step below hospital acute care, skilled nursing communities offer medical care by trained medical staff, such as a registered nurse or therapist, 24 hours a day, and may also include rehabilitation services, memory support services and other types of therapeutic care.

Residents of skilled nursing care communities typically have high care needs and complex medical conditions that require routine skilled nursing services. Life-enriching activities are usually provided, along with healthy meals for various dietary needs.

Also referred to as: Convalescent Care, Long-Term Care Facility, Nursing Center, Nursing Homes

Advantages

- Trained personnel, including physicians and nurses, serve the individual needs of patients.
- Care is provided 24 hours/day.

Disadvantages

- High demand means certain nursing homes may not have openings.
- Differences in quality of skilled nursing care can vary widely.

There comes a time when providing the best possible care for an aging loved one might mean finding the right type of help or support outside of what family members can provide. Settling on the ideal senior care for a family member is often easier with a full understanding of the various types of care and the differences among them.

Talk to us today about the senior care options available for your loved one.

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