



The Senior Care Continuum: A quick guide to the options

As they begin their searches, families may be overwhelmed by the sheer number of in-home care and senior housing choices. For some, the result is paralysis, with delays and indecision when action is called for. Straight talk, clear facts and digestible resources can help, and an overview of the options is a good place to start.

This guide can help you know more about your choices. And that can help you feel more confident as you make decisions with your family.

What are the options for Senior Care?



Here's what you should know about each of the different types of Senior Care:

Home Care Services

Many seniors and their adult children are familiar with this type of care. It's also known as non-medical home care, in-home care and private-duty home care. Professional caregivers bring services to an older adult or person living with a disability in whatever setting they call home. They can provide assistance with what are referred to as the activities of daily living (ADLs) and the instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs).

ADLs are the tasks closely related to personal care; they include eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring and continence.

By contrast, IADLs are those tasks each of us needs to be able to complete to maintain our independence. Common examples of IADLs include organizing menus, preparing meals, scheduling health care appointments and refilling prescriptions.

Home care services can be used for a few hours a day or week – or around the clock if a higher level of support is needed.

Independent Living Community

More active seniors may be interested in the lifestyle an independent living community offers. This type of senior housing environment can range from a multi-unit apartment complex to a condominium or villa.

A full calendar of life enrichment activities and the opportunity to enjoy a rich social life are popular benefits of these communities. Worry-free living is another advantage, as independent living communities eliminate the hassles of home repairs and maintenance.

Many independent living communities also offer residents services such as housekeeping, meals and transportation.

Assisted Living Community

Adult children and their aging parents often find peace of mind in this choice, because it's designed to provide just enough care and support to help residents maintain confidence in their independence.

Assisted living residents have their own private apartment or suite that is designed with senior safety in mind. Grab bars, handrails, a fire suppression system and an emergency call system are all standard features.

While assisted living residents can maintain a rich social life filled with friendship, activities and events, they also benefit from having the extra care and support they need on site around the clock. Caregivers can provide assistance with personal care needs, as well as with medication management.

Memory Care Programs

Specialty care for Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia is often referred to as memory care. These dedicated programs offer a safe and supportive environment. In addition to all the benefits of traditional assisted living, memory care residential settings are staffed by caregivers who have training and experience working with adults who live with memory loss.

Memory care life enrichment activities are designed to allow residents with memory impairments to feel successful. Meals are prepared to work around the challenges the memory loss creates. Many memory care programs also have secure outdoor areas. All these specialty features help promote positive self-esteem for residents living with memory impairment.

CCRC (Continuing Care Retirement Community)

A CCRC is home to a wide range of senior care services that typically include independent living apartments and/or villas, assisted living, memory care, and skilled nursing. Some also offer home care, and rehabilitation and hospice services.

These campuses are popular with older adults who are looking for a senior housing community that meets their needs now and into the future. A senior may choose to move to a CCRC when they're active and seeking opportunities for life enrichment, but do so knowing the community offers a continuum of care when the need arises.

Senior Care at a Glance

This chart may make it easier to quickly understand what services are available at each different level of senior care.

In-Home Care, Home Care	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistance with personal care, including bathing, dressing & grooming• Menu planning, grocery shopping, meal preparation• Light housekeeping • Laundry • Transportation • Companionship	
Independent Living Community	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life enrichment activities, community outings & events• Friendship & fellowship• Optional support services such as meal programs, housekeeping & transportation• Residence maintenance• Snow removal & lawn care• Trash pick-up	
Assisted Living Community	Memory Care Program
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assistance with personal care, including bathing, dressing & grooming• Light housekeeping & laundry• Menu planning, grocery shopping, meal preparation• Transportation• Companionship• Residence maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Life enrichment activities, community outings & events• Friendship & fellowship• Residence maintenance• Optional support services such as meal programs, housekeeping & transportation
Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Designed to support the active senior as well as older adults who need additional care or specialized services, offering seamless transitions through levels of care & often a discounted rate on care• Full continuum of senior care services on one campus, which typically includes independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing & memory care• Full calendar of life enrichment activities based on each resident's abilities• Transportation• Residence maintenance	



We encourage you to share this guide with each family member who will be involved in making this decision. Having everyone share a basic understanding of the senior care options that are available can make it easier to move forward and begin meeting with senior care providers in your local community.

Explore more of our resources at:

[WhereYouLiveMatters.org](https://www.wherelivematters.org)