



FINDING THE RIGHT LEVEL OF CARE FOR YOUR PARENTS

You think your parents could benefit from some kind of senior living community, but which one? There are several categories of senior living options that provide different levels of service and care depending on the need of the individual. So how do you know which one is right for your parents?

Use this tool to get started. Ask yourself these questions. Then talk to your parents and their doctors, if necessary, so that, together, you can make sure your parents are living the best life possible.



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INDEPENDENT LIVING

An independent living community offers opportunities for your parents to make friends, pursue their interests, and take care of their minds, bodies and spirits – all while freeing them up from the burdens of home ownership.

Think about their:

Social Interaction – Do they talk about being lonely? Do they still see friends regularly, or is their circle of friends shrinking? Does inclement weather or the hassle of driving keep them from social opportunities like book clubs or religious services?

Mental Stimulation – Do they have hobbies and activities that keep them busy and happy? Do they complain about being bored or seem discontent with retired life? Do they have opportunities to volunteer, go on cultural outings, or take classes to learn something new?

Physical Well-being – Is their overall health good? Can they still live on their own? Do they need ways to stay physically active, such as a fitness or swim class, walking or biking trails, yoga or tai chi? Do they eat regular nutritious meals?

Home Maintenance – Can they take care of home repairs and yard work, or is it getting to be too much to deal with? Would they benefit from housekeeping services? Can they take care of snow and leaf removal or pool maintenance? Do they live in the whole house, or are there rooms they never go into?

ASSISTED LIVING

Assisted living communities may be right for your parents if they need some extra daily help and would enjoy a community setting. They are designed to help older adults live more independently through personal services, transportation, and home maintenance.

Have you noticed any of these in your parents?

Weight Changes – Unexplained weight loss or gain could mean they are not eating properly. They may be having trouble cooking, or could be experiencing a loss of taste, which can be common in older adults. Ask about their meals, and check the pantry and refrigerator for signs of old food or less food than normal.

Mobility Issues – Do they have trouble navigating stairs or moving around furniture? Do they need to hold on to furniture for balance? Is their gait unsteady? Have they had multiple falls? Do you notice bruises and scrapes, which could be signs of falls or accidents?

ADL Problems – Activities of daily living (ADLs) include dressing, bathing, grooming, and toileting. Have you noticed a decline in personal care habits? Do they ask you for help getting dressed? Have they had incidents of incontinence? Do they have trouble taking care of basic housework like cleaning or doing the dishes?

Difficulty Driving – Has their vision impacted their ability to drive safely? Have they had any accidents or trouble parking? Do they get confused navigating? Have they started to ask you or other people to drive them places? Have they stopped going places because driving is “too much of a bother”?

Medication Management Problems – Are their prescriptions current? Do they take multiple medicines? Do they have trouble remembering to take their medications, or sometimes mix them up? When they get new medications, do they know about possible interactions with their current prescriptions?

SKILLED NURSING CARE

Skilled nursing care in a licensed health care facility may be right for your parents if they need rehabilitation services or a higher level of continuous care for health issues too complicated to be dealt with at home or in an assisted living facility.

Do your parents experience the following?

Increased Mobility Issues – Can they get up from a chair or the bed on their own? Do they need help transferring to a wheelchair? Have they limited themselves to one or two rooms in the house because they have trouble getting around? Are you concerned for their physical safety in the house?


Increased ADL Problems – Do they need help with most, if not all, of their activities of daily living? Can they bathe and dress themselves? Do they have trouble identifying their medications? Can they groom and feed themselves without help? Can they no longer maintain the house on their own?

Serious Health Conditions – Do they have a chronic or serious health condition that needs daily care by a licensed nurse or doctor? Have they had an injury, illness, or surgery that requires ongoing care or rehabilitative services? Do they have Alzheimer's or some other form of memory loss? Is their health condition more than you or their present caregiver can provide?



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