

Making the Right Decision: Home Care or the Alternatives?

If you ask your senior loved one where he'd want to spend the rest of his life, he'll most likely say he'd prefer to stay home with you (or in his home). This shouldn't be a problem, though, since more and more families now choose home care for their loved ones.

While some people believe the alternatives – i.e., assisted living facilities and nursing homes – are perfect for their loved ones, home care or aging in place is popular among the elderly and seniors. Staying with their families or their current homes is just one of the many home care benefits your senior loved one will enjoy.

However, your basis should not only be what your loved one wants but also what is good for him. For example, if your senior family member requires regular medical care, you have to consider this. If your loved one lives alone and is doing quite well but might need occasional care and assistance, you should consider this as well. It's not an easy decision to make, but if you know your priorities and the available options, making the right choice won't be such a challenge anymore.

Home Care for Seniors

Understanding home care and how it can help your loved one is the first step to knowing what your options are.

Home care is the best option for seniors or the elderly who need assistance but do not want to move out of their homes. These seniors or elderly family members need only part-time care. It does not involve any medical assistance and focuses more on caregiving.

The goal of home care is to provide assistance and care for ADLs or Activities of Daily Living (meal prep, companionship, bathing, moving from the bed to the chair, and other daily activities). Home care can be once a week, every day, or 24 hours a day – depending on how much care and assistance your senior loved one needs.

Aging in place is more cost-efficient than assisted living, but should you choose it over the alternatives, you have to have the house renovated to be suitable for home care.

It is also essential to keep in mind that home care is ideal for seniors who:

- need assistance with moving around the house
- need assistance with daily household activities
- are isolated and in need of companionship

- need assistance with ADLs
- need assistance in going to appointments, buying groceries, and other similar activities
- need assistance in housekeeping
- are experiencing the early stages of dementia or any memory impairment-related disorders

Home care is not ideal for:

- seniors who need regular medical care
- seniors who need therapy (physical, speech, occupational)
- seniors who are in the advanced stages of dementia any memory impairment-related disorder

There are three types of home care: home health care, personal care, and companion care.

Home Health Care

This is often physician-recommended and requires a health care aide who is professionally trained in medical assistance. Home health care aides should have certification and training – specifically a nursing certificate.

Common services provided via home health care include infusions, injections, IV insertions, wound care, and therapy (occupational, physical).

Personal Care

Personal care aides or caregivers help seniors carry out ADLs. They may also assist in medication management, but they are not allowed to offer medical care. Their goal is to help make seniors' lives easier, safer, and more comfortable.

This type of home care is not ideal for seniors with medical needs. It is similar to the kind of care provided in assisted living communities.

Companion Care

Companion care is intended for seniors who live alone or independently. They do not require 24-hour or daily assistance but need the companionship provided by caregivers. They need social interaction and support because they often feel isolated and alone.

A companion care provider often spends time talking with the senior. He also does activities and hobbies with his client. It can be reading, watching a movie, or playing board games. Sometimes, he also assists in medication management and transportation.

Companion care is home care that's also ideal for seniors experiencing the early stages of cognitive decline (i.e., dementia).

The Alternatives

The following are the common alternatives to home care:

1. ALP or Assisted Living Program

Assisted Living Program, or ALP, is the best option for seniors who need assistance and care 24/7. If needed, he can even request an increase in the level of assistance and care. He lives in his own apartment, and he can socialize with other senior residents. He doesn't have to worry about cleaning or housekeeping, meals, and transportation because assistance is available for such activities.

Families who choose the Assisted Living Program can ask for additional services, which often come with corresponding fees.

2. Skilled Nursing Facility or Nursing Home

Skilled nursing facilities are ideal for seniors who require regular medical assistance. Most nursing home residents are the elderly and seniors who have just recovered from surgery or illness and need nurses' and physicians' care 24/7.

Nursing homes are properties typically enclosed and surrounded by a gate or high walls. Security personnel ensure that the facilities are safe 24 hours a day.

3. Independent Living Apartments

This home care alternative is for seniors who do not need personal assistance or medical care. It is for seniors who want to live with other people their age who share their interests.

Independent living apartments are non-regulated and no-license residences. The seniors who live in these units enjoy group activities and community events such as shopping trips, watching a movie, and going on field trips.

4. Retirement Communities/Senior Apartments or Continuing Care Retirement Communities

A CCRC is one big community that offers assisted living and nursing homes in a compound or subdivision-like location. It allows senior residents to transition from an assisted living facility to a nursing home when the need arises. They don't have to worry about adjusting to changes because the community is already a familiar one for them.

Some families may find retirement communities a little costly as most require advance annuity payment or buy-in and monthly payments.

5. Family-Type Homes

These are residential or family-type homes with a maximum of four senior residents. The house is operated by someone not related to any of the residents. Services offered include supervision, housekeeping, and long-term residential care.

Family-type homes are under the management of the Social Services Department.

6. Enriched Housing

This home care alternative is not as popular as the others on this list. Enriched housing is a facility where seniors are housed in independent units and provided at least one meal a day.

Through its Department of Health, the state provides the license for homes under this senior care program.

Benefits of Choosing Home Care

Aging in place has many benefits for your family and senior loved one.

1. Home care puts your senior loved in an environment that's familiar to him. Thus, he won't feel lost, isolated, or disoriented. He'll be relaxed, comfortable, and confident that he is in a safe place.
2. Your senior loved one won't be far away from you. You can spend time with him every day. He won't feel isolated from the rest of the family and relatives, and friends.
3. There's only one caregiver, so it will be easy for your loved one to establish a connection with the caregiver. Additionally, providing one-on-one and personalized care is easier. The caregiver can give 100% of his attention to your senior loved one. Addressing the senior patient's specific needs won't be a problem as well.
4. Your loved one won't have to share a room or living space with other seniors or the elderly. He'll have privacy and safety.

5. Seniors who are aging in place are allowed to continue doing their daily activities, albeit with their caregiver's help. As such, they enjoy some freedom.

6. If you decide to put your senior loved one in home care, you and the rest of the family will decide which caregiver to hire. You'll also be the one to list preferences and criteria.

Understanding all the options available to you, and knowing what they offer, will help you decide which one is the right choice. Whether it's home care or any of the alternatives, your priority should be your senior loved one's safety, security, care, and happiness.