

## Options of Elder Care

By Mel Higham

There is an awful lot to be said for an elderly person remaining at home as long as possible [1]. Home is familiar, the place holds a lot of treasured memories, and staying at home is key to retaining independence and feeling less like a 'burden' on family members (however inaccurate that feeling may be). However, there may well come a point when home is simply no longer a



*Know when it is time to get extra help and which type of care is appropriate for your loved one's needs.*

healthy, safe, or practical option. People who need medically intensive round the clock care, or are unable to afford the assistance required to keep themselves safe and their homes running efficiently may well be better off if they receive care in a facility setting. This can be a hard decision to make, but there are a few pointers which may make choosing easier.

### Struggling With ADLs and IADLs

'ADL' stands for Activities of Daily Living [5]. These activities include ambulation, bathing, continence, dressing and grooming, eating and toileting. The ability to manage these activities is necessary to live independently. IADL mean Instrumental Activities of Daily Living and they include doing housework and laundry, shopping and preparing meals, managing medications, money and caring for pets, as well as other basic functions which supplement independent living. As people age they lose the ability to perform these activities as they used to. Inability to perform ADLs and IADLs are usually the sign that assistance is necessary. Most elderly will maintain a degree of function with their ADLs and IADLs and can often still live quite happily in their own homes with a greater or lesser amount of outside assistance. However, when functionality of these activities drop significantly, then it's considered a sign that your

loved one may need to make some changes so their needs can be met on a more permanent and professional level.

### **Home Health Care Option**

Staying at home for as long as possible is usually a very good idea. Many elderly prefer to stay at home and will refuse to move despite their need for increased daily care with their ADLs and IADLs. Moving elderly people away from the comfort and familiarity of home can be very distressing, which in turn can affect their health. For such people, home health care is probably the best option. Home health care can help your ageing loved one maintain their treasured independence and stay safe in the comfort of their own home.

Medically trained Caregivers can come to the home and provide the individualized care that the elderly person needs. Home health care can be very flexible and provide as little as an occasional visit every two weeks to tidy up the house to round the clock care daily care. In some cases with the help of home health care, it is possible to remain at home long term and receive appropriate care which includes hospice and end of life care. The home health Caregiver forms a unique bond with their home patients and in many cases, become part of the family. The elderly person receiving care has dependable care that is tailored to their preferences. Not only does this keep them feeling comfortable and safe at home, but it also allows them to maintain their independence which is indescribably valuable to the elderly.

### **Assisted Living Option**

The hardest part of sending a parent or loved one to a facility setting can be persuading them that it's the right thing to do. Often they just don't want to go, and it's not unusual for distressing scenes to develop [3]. On these occasions, it may be a good idea to look at assisted living options. In most assisted living situations the facility is set up to feel like home. The buildings have individual rooms which Residents can decorate with personal items from home. There are common living areas which promote socialization among all the elderly who live there. It may not be home, but assisted living facilities try to maintain a home-like atmosphere while providing the care that an elderly person needs.

When looking at assisted living facility, also known as a CBRF, Community Based Residential Facility, it is best to remember that there are many types of facilities which offer different degrees of care. It is wise to ask about the facility's state classification to get a clear idea of what degree of care they are allowed to provide. Some facilities provide limited care and assistance while others can provide full health care on site, including up to end of life care. Choosing a facility according to its location and décor is often short sighted as your loved one's care needs will increase and that may mean having to change facilities in the future.

### **Nursing Home Option**

If your loved one has an acute health condition, a nursing home may be the best option. When an elderly person requires care which isn't feasible to manage at home with home health care, or is beyond the scope of care for an assisted living facility, then a stay in a nursing home might be the best option. Typically a nursing home has a more institutional atmosphere as the focus is in health care rather than just assisting with ADLs and IADLs.

The bottom line is, if your loved one is seriously struggling in their own home, and their quality of life is declining as a consequence, then it is probably time to start considering the various options. Care solutions can be found in many locations, even at home, but matching the type of care to your loved one's needs requires some thought and planning. Remember the goal is to ensure that your loved one is safe and can enjoy a rewarding quality of life no matter which option is chosen.

[1] National Institute On Aging, "[There's No Place Like Home - For Growing Old](#)",

[2] Council On The Ageing, Victoria, "[The Voice of older people on Independence](#)", 2009

[3] Carol Bradley Bursack, "[Handling a Parent Who Doesn't Want to Live in A Nursing Home](#)", [AgingCare.com](#)

[4] KwikMed, "[20 Truly Exceptional Elderly Care Sites](#)"

[5] PBS, "[Checklist Of Activities Of Daily Living \(ADL\)](#)"

[6] Alzheimer's Association, "[Choosing a Care Facility](#)"



**HomeAid Health Care**  
*Helping Hands at Home*

Mel Higham is a writer and editor with a special interest in mental health and wellness. As a guest writer for HomeAid Health Care's Elder Topics, Mel brings her expertise to our audience.

HomeAid is sister company to Prairie Home Assisted Living which has served the physical, spiritual, mental and health needs of their residents since 1999. Together the two companies provide comprehensive care for the elderly in the Fox Valley area of Wisconsin.