

Alternatives to Nursing Homes

Before deciding on a nursing home, you may want to consider other options. Some people have an aversion to nursing homes and want to try out almost anything else before they go into one. Others do not necessarily need the 24-hour, total supervisory care of a nursing home. Even for someone who cannot live independently and needs a high level of care, however, there are alternatives, and it makes good sense to understand and evaluate them.

Alternatives will vary widely depending on whether you live in a city, a suburb or a rural area. Generally, people in rural areas have fewer options than those in cities or suburbs. Some of the alternatives to nursing homes may include the following:

COMMUNITY SERVICES

These can include transportation services, telephone reassurance programs, home maintenance and repair services, senior centers, Meals on Wheels programs and home observation programs.

ADULT DAY SERVICES

These programs offer all-day, morning, afternoon and sometimes evening care for seniors.

HOMEMAKING AND PERSONAL CARE SERVICES

These provide assistance with homemaking (such as cooking and cleaning) and personal care (such as dressing and bathing).

SUBSIDIZED, NONMEDICAL SENIOR HOUSING

Some federal and state programs subsidize housing for low-to-moderate income seniors—offering assistance with shopping, laundry and cleaning. Usually, residents live in independent apartments within a larger complex.



HOME HEALTH CARE

Semi-skilled and skilled services are available, for a few hours a day or 24 hours a day, for people who need medical care at home.

ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES

Generally unsubsidized, assisted living facilities charge a regular monthly rent, with fees charged for any special services. Assistance may include help with tasks like cooking, laundry or remembering medications.

BOARD AND CARE HOMES

These group-living arrangements provide some care services as well as opportunities for socialization. They often provide help with some daily activities, like eating, walking, bathing and other general personal care tasks. The homes are usually not covered by Medicare or Medicaid, and often they are not strictly monitored by State or Federal agencies. Under some circumstances, they may be covered by private long-term care insurance or other medical assistance programs.