

Living Arrangements

The choice of living arrangements for older people is one of the most basic decisions you will have to make, and it will involve many conflicting emotions. There are basically three choices when it comes to living arrangements, and each has its own advantages and disadvantages.



Home

The major advantage of living at home is

that the elder can maintain a sense of independence, self-worth and privacy. Moreover, staying in a comfortable and familiar environment has proven to be beneficial in many cases.

The major disadvantage of staying home, however—particularly if they are alone—is that the elder may not be able to take care of him- or herself effectively. Finances, bills, medications, meals, bathing and housekeeping chores can be difficult to keep up with. Another issue is safety, including a lack of support railings, steep stairs, crime, etc.

Staying home is easier if there is family nearby, or if it is possible to hire home care to aid with some or all of the requirements of daily living. Before deciding on the option of staying home, evaluate the older person's capabilities, any medical problems, the ability of family members, friends and neighbors to help out, and the availability of home care services. These factors must all be considered before a decision can be made about whether staying home is the best option.



Family

An elder can also move in with family (or the family can move

in with an older adult)—an adult child or a sister or brother, for instance. This option can help ease the pressures and problems associated with living alone, and can provide a built-in support system. For many people, such a situation works out wonderfully. Some caregivers find it more convenient to provide care when the elder is in their home, and many elders enjoy being close to their family members—particularly their grandchildren.

There are some disadvantages to moving in with family, however. Privacy and independence (for both the elder and their family members) become issues, as do meal preparation, space requirements, financial demands, transportation, childrearing and other responsibilities.

This option works well only if the lines of communication are kept open. If problems are not aired constructively, they may escalate into heated arguments. Frequent discussion is a must, as is honest expression of the feelings of everyone involved. When it works, it can be an ideal situation. When it doesn't, it can have painful consequences on all the family members.

Retirement Community, Assisted Living Facility, or Nursing Home



There used to be only one choice if someone

was going to live in an institution—a nursing home. Now we have a multitude of choices.

Retirement communities can resemble an apartment or condominium complex, with many of the same amenities and freedoms. They provide a way for people to maintain a sense of independence at the same time as they provide a social network and the freedom from some chores—including yard work and house maintenance. Some offer progressive levels of assistance in order to adjust care as a person's needs increase.

Assisted living facilities provide a higher level of care, with nurses and physical therapists on staff, transportation and other offerings.

Nursing Homes are best for those who are no longer mobile or who need a high level of physical and/or emotional care.

These options typically cost more money and depend on factors such as insurance coverage, family contribution and estate worth.