

NSLAP WELLNESS TIP: Caring for Aging Parents and Loved Ones: Housing options for the elderly

The following is an article excerpt from Homewood Human Solutions™, your health and wellness provider.

One of the most important decisions you will make is your elder's living situation as their health changes. Here are some possible options you might need to consider:

Staying put at home

With support from friends and family, seniors usually prefer to live in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. When their health declines, they often require additional support services delivered by community-based agencies to keep them safe, happy, and healthy at home.

Available home care resources include:

- Nursing care for medications, injuries, etc.
- Personal care and support for daily activities and grooming help with regular day-to-day activities including errands, shopping, cleaning, and transportation
- Homemaker services such as Meals on Wheel.
- Companions who spend time with an elderly person reading to them or taking them on outings, or full-time attendants who provide daily one-on-one care in the home
- Adult day care programs designed for individuals with disorders such as Alzheimer's disease that offer away-from-the-home care during working hours
- Occupational therapy for in-home assessments, physiotherapy, exercise training, and rehabilitation
- Nutritional counselling, naturopathy, and chiropractic services provided in the home
- Respite care provided by special programs designed to give family caregivers a break, or fill in if the caregiver is sick

Retirement apartments and communities

Apartment complexes with one bedroom or two bedroom units designed for the elderly exist across Canada. Some are subsidized for individuals who qualify (usually income-based). Activity and leisure programs are included, and many have other useful services, such as buses to local shopping or health professionals who visit regularly.

Retirement communities usually contain a variety of housing (from apartments to townhouses) and offer additional features, such as meal or maid services. Many of these communities are designed to offer expandable levels of care. For example, as a person loses independence or becomes frail, medical or nursing assistance can be made available. These communities tend to be privately operated (although some are subsidized).

Living with you

In-law suites can be a suitable solution when parents are unable to live alone but are not yet ready to move into a nursing home. These can be an added extension or an apartment within the home that includes separate kitchen and bathroom facilities. Another option is that parents live with you and have their own bedroom.

Continuing care retirement or life-care communities

These communities provide various types of accommodation and services, including independent rental units. They also offer 24-hour skilled nursing care, so residents can change the nature of their care as

their needs change. Although residents may pay significant entrance fees, they enter into a binding legal agreement that will, for the duration of their lives, guarantee nursing and health-related services. Watch for hidden or rising costs of care when budgeting.

Long term nursing care facilities

These facilities offer a variety of accommodation options. Residents of the facility pay a fee based on the type or style of accommodation. "Preferred" accommodation is a term used to describe private or semi-private suites with special features, whereas basic or standard accommodation refers to shared accommodations. Expect dining rooms and common rooms, and facilities such as a lounge, beauty salon, chapel, garden or gift shop. Basic packages will include furnishings, meals, bed linens, and laundry services, personal hygiene, supplies, pastoral services, social and recreational programs, medication administration and assistance with the essential activities of daily living. Nursing and personal care on a 24-hour basis may also be provided, as well as access to a physician and other health professionals.

Palliative care

Palliative care is a special kind of health care for individuals who are living with a life threatening illness, usually at an advanced stage. The goal is to provide the best quality of life by ensuring their comfort and dignity. Pain management, symptom management, and social, psychological, emotional, and spiritual support are the focus. Palliative care is offered by specially qualified staff, including at home, in long-term care facilities, and in hospitals.

*For additional information, support, resources and counseling on health and wellness, visit the NSLAP website at www.nslap.ca. Please note that **NSLAP** is your "company" name when you register. When you call the NSLAP number at **1-866-299-1299**, (Français: 1-866-398-9505; TTY: 1-888-384-1152) Your call will be answered any time, day or night, 365 days per year.*