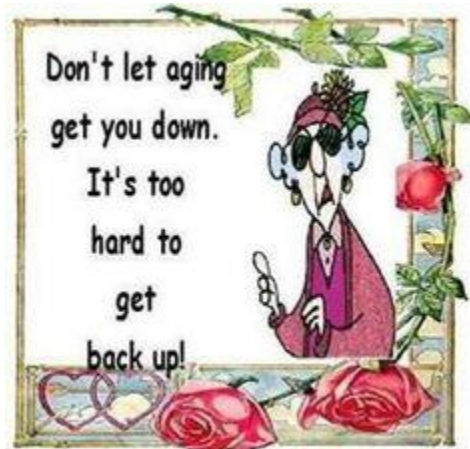


## Staying at Home Safely

### Until You Know Change Is Good



Getting older is a challenge but as we get older, we realize that each stage of life comes with challenge. As requested, here are some ideas for you to consider as we all get older. Make the best of what you have and keep a smile ready to warm the coldest day.

**YOUNG AT HEART**  
Slightly older in other places.

**No.1    Downsize \_\_\_\_.** With family gone from underfoot, consider what you need around you. **PRIORITIZE** If you don't deal with the overflow, someone will have to do it for you at some point. Donate, give to other family members or throw it out. When you look in closets and drawers, there is an amazing collection of "things".

**No.2    Keep your living space on one level.** If you have a two storey house with a basement, there are some modifications to consider.

Washer and dryer should be close by. You will not want to carry a laundry basket up or down stairs. Consider stackable appliances that would fit in a porch or closet.

Find a space for an extra bathroom. Even if there is only space for a toilet, that is the most important piece to have on your living level.

Also consider a downstairs bedroom. When mobility is an issue, you just fit in a bed somewhere. If you want to stay put, you may have to compromise.

**No. 3    Look for assistive devices.** There are all kinds of ways to help with problems you may face. Pharmacy home care displays are a great place to get ideas. They have lots of devices to assist you when living at home. Wheelchairs, walkers, canes, bath seats, dressing aids, diabetic socks, chairs to help you stand, aids for putting on socks, and many more items are available. There are usually no taxes on medical supplies, so ask to see if this applies.

Get the pharmacy to blister pack your medications. Most will do this free of charge and these make it easy to track the time and amounts each day.

**No. 4    Help yourself.** Get a "Call Me" club together for peace of mind. Make a daily check-in schedule so family members will know you are safe. You can also get a medic alert system installed. This way you will always be able to signal for help if in difficulty. You just press a button and the phone will connect to a central office. People there will then let someone you designate, know that you may need help.

Think about hiring someone to help you out. To have someone once a week to help with cleaning or cooking, will make you feel on top of the world and be well worth the cost.

**No. 5    Ask for help.** Doctors, nurses or public health can put you in touch with the right person for your needs. There are homecare nurses, foot care nurses, occupational therapists,

physiotherapists, and other helpers to keep you in good health. Maybe your medical insurance will cover costs of some of these needs.

Think of organizations that could help. CNIB provides assistance for those with sight loss. The Canadian Hard of Hearing Assoc. can lend support for hearing loss. Rotary Clubs sometimes provide transportation for appointments. Some church groups will deliver meals once a month. Meals on Wheels may be available in a town where hospitals or long term care facilities are located.

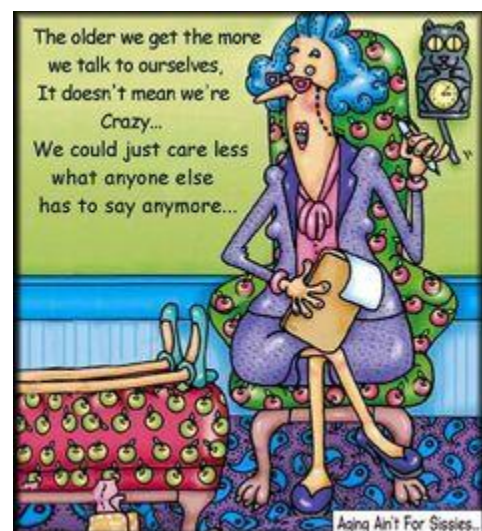
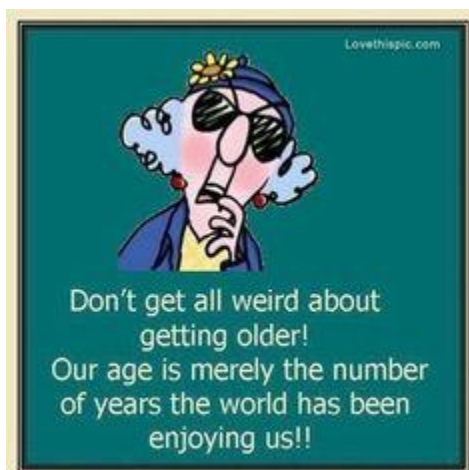
Work the system for all avenues to get help.

The following pages have information taken from three sites on the internet. They may be of help to families of aging parents or to those older people looking for ways to manage on their own.

[www.agingcare.com/Home-Safety](http://www.agingcare.com/Home-Safety)

[helpguide.org/articles/senior-housing/home-care-services-for-seniors.htm](http://helpguide.org/articles/senior-housing/home-care-services-for-seniors.htm)

[healthpei.ca/homecare](http://healthpei.ca/homecare)



## **Tips to Extend Independence of a Senior at Home**

By **Andrew Atkinson**

Most people list their independence among the things that are most important to them. Small children are proud of the day that they learn to tie their shoelaces, teenagers enjoy the freedom that comes with passing their driving test, and senior adults seek to retain their independence for as long as possible.

Unfortunately, as we age we sometimes have to fight to remain independent. Those who are caring for an aging loved one are likely familiar with this power struggle. It can take some creativity and gentle persuasion to help a loved one remain safe and independent at home. These are a few easy tips a family caregiver can use to help extend their freedom.

**Write Lists** Lists are a valuable resource at any age. They are even more important for those with failing memories and those that have minds so full of other information that they can no longer remember small tasks or appointments.

If you notice a pattern of small incomplete or overlooked tasks each time you visit your aging relative, supply them with a list of objectives that can keep their home in good order. Perhaps these things have been important to them in the past, like watering plants, recording a TV show, or daily routines that are now easily forgotten. Lists are also valuable for gentle reminders of where things are as well as when appointments are scheduled.

Show them how to mark out a task when it is completed and ask them to see to each task on the list before the next visit. This doesn't just remind them to do the laundry, dust the coffee table and clean out the fridge. It also brings their limitations to the surface and aids in keeping track of any gradual changes in their abilities over time.

### **Supply the Required Equipment**

Surprisingly, there are a wide variety of household aids that are available to make life easier. Learn what an aging relative considers his or her restrictions to be, then research what is available that will help them to get around those limitations. It is important to keep a realistic perspective and not jump to conclusions too soon. As family, they trust and want this help to maintain their independence in their own home for as long as possible.

Useful daily living aids that can help an older adult look after their home include reaching tools, grabbers, doorknob grips, faucet turning aids, remote controls, and clocks and phones with large numbers for easier visibility.

### **Check in Regularly**

If an aging relative is not coping particularly well, the issue can be resolved quickly with proper awareness. Try to visit as often as your schedule allows, and do not space out visits too much. If you visit for an hour each morning and an hour each evening, then any issues will be easily

noticed, as opposed to stopping in twice a week for six hours, which can allow problems to build up in between. Visits that are too far apart also open the possibility of more serious situations going unaddressed, such as a fall, injury, urgent home repair, or spills on the floor, etc.

### **Network with Neighbors**

It is likely to find that younger people in their neighborhood will be all too happy to help with basic tasks, or at least to keep an eye on the house from a distance. The problem is that many older people do not connect with their younger neighbors and vice versa, leaving those community members with no idea that someone could need their support. A simple request for help while providing the neighbors with contact information can prevent a potentially dangerous situation that may go unnoticed otherwise.

On their behalf, visit a younger neighbor and introduce yourself and the situation. Do not ask the neighbor to do any household chores. Instead ask if they will look out for your mom or dad when it is convenient for them. It can be surprising how much some people, especially long-time neighbors, are willing to help.

### **Consider Hired Help**

If a senior adult is struggling to look after their home, but does not necessarily need to be in a dedicated care facility, then hiring a housekeeper or looking for a [home health aide](#) can allow them to enjoy life at home with less responsibility

Hiring a professional in-home caregiver can reduce the pressure, while helping aging relatives retain their independence.

Remember to consider their unique and individual circumstances as their need for assistance increases. There will be a time when alternative care arrangements are likely to be necessary, for the benefit of all involved. Until then, enable them to retain as much freedom in their own home as possible.

By [Marlo Sollitto](#)

If a loved one is adamant about remaining at home for as long as possible, and if they can physically and financially care for themselves and their residence, some adaptive products and safety equipment can be used to help make this arrangement successful for everyone.

### **Products and Equipment**

The following items can be used to make a loved one's home safe and accessible as well as assist them with independently completing activities of daily living:

- [Emergency response system](#) (an electronic device designed to summon help in an emergency)
- Risers for toilet seats
- Grab bars for the bathroom near the toilet and shower
- Hand-held shower head
- Bath bench
- Walk-in bathtub or shower
- Bedroom products (adjustable beds, waterproof mattresses, over-bed tables, incontinence pads, railings, etc.)
- Adequate lighting throughout the home, including night lights
- Medicine organizer or alarmed dispenser
- Medicine droppers and spoons
- Button loopers and zipper pulls for easier dressing
- Adaptive clothing and shoes
- Specialized dinnerware to enable easier eating
- Single-lever faucets for kitchen and bathrooms
- Touch-tone telephones with large numbers, speaker or hands-free capabilities, and/or text capability for those who are deaf or hard of hearing (TTY or TDD)
- Talking clocks and wristwatches for people with poor vision
- [Low vision equipment](#) to assist with reading and other activities
- Kitchen tools that make opening cans and bottles, peeling potatoes, and cutting and dicing vegetables easier and safer
- Make sure appliances have easy-to-use controls and [automatic shut-off](#) capabilities
- "Reachers" or pincher-like devices for people who have a weak grasp or limited mobility to eliminate bending over or having to reach for objects
- Ramps for entryways with steps
- Stair lifts for multi-story homes

- Mobility equipment for individuals who have difficulty getting around the house (rollator, walker, cane, etc.)
- Baskets or other accessories for mobility equipment to assist in carrying food and other items
- Lift chairs for those who have difficulty getting in and out of a seated position
- A list of who to call in case of an emergency to keep by the phone

From [HELPGUIDE.ORG](http://HELPGUIDE.ORG)

## Is home care right for my loved one or me?

It's natural to want to stay at home as you grow older. However, taking a step back to look at the big picture can help you decide whether staying at home for the long term truly is the right step for you. Too often, decisions to leave home are suddenly made after a sudden loss or emergency, making adjustments all the more painful and difficult. Take a look at your options, your budget, and some of the alternatives.

### Deciding whether to stay at home

Your home situation is unique, and several factors will weigh in on the best choice for you. Here are some of the issues in evaluating your options:

- **Location and accessibility.** Where is your home located? Are you in a rural or suburban area that requires a lot of driving? If you're in an area with more public transit, is it safe and easily accessible? How much time does it take you to get to services such as shopping or medical appointments?
- **Home accessibility and maintenance.** Is your home easily modified? Does it have a lot of steps or a steep hill to access? Do you have a large yard that needs to be maintained?
- **Support available.** Do you have family and friends nearby? How involved are they? Are they able to provide you the support you need? Many older adults prefer to rely on family to provide help, but as your needs increase, they might not be able to fill in all of the gaps. It's important to consider proximity to community services and activities as well.
- **Isolation.** If it becomes difficult or impossible for you to leave home without help, isolation can rapidly set in. You may not be able to participate in hobbies you once loved, stay involved in community service that kept you motivated, or visit with friends and family. Losing these connections and support is a recipe for depression.
- **Medical conditions.** No one can predict the future. However, if you or a loved one has a chronic medical condition that is expected to worsen over time, it's especially important to think about how you will handle health and mobility problems. What are common complications of your condition, and how will you handle them?
- **Finances.** Making a budget with anticipated expenses can help you weigh the pros and cons of your situation. Alternate arrangements like assisted living can be expensive, but extensive in-home help can rapidly become expensive as well, especially at higher levels of care and live-in or 24-hour coverage.

# **What can help me stay at home?**

You may be used to handling everything yourself, dividing up duties with your spouse, or relying on family members for help. But as circumstances change, it's good to be aware of all the home care services available that might be of help. What you may need depends on how much support you have, your general health, and your financial situation.

## **Household maintenance**

Keeping a household running smoothly takes a lot of work. If you're finding it hard to keep up, you can look into laundry, shopping, gardening, housekeeping, and handyman services. If you're having trouble staying on top of bills and appointments, financial and healthcare management may also be helpful.

## **Transportation**

Transportation is a key issue for older adults. Maybe you're finding it hard to drive or don't like to drive at night. Investigating transportation options can help you keep your independence and maintain your social network. You may want to look into local transportation such as buses, reduced fare taxis, and senior transportation options to appointments.

## **Home modifications**

If your mobility is becoming limited, home modifications can go a long way towards making home more comfortable. This can include things such as grab bars in the shower, ramps to avoid or minimize the use of stairs, or even installing new bathrooms on the ground floor.

## **Personal care**

Help with activities of daily living, such as dressing, bathing, feeding, or meal preparation, is called personal care or custodial care. You can hire help with personal care, ranging from a few hours a day to live-in care. People who provide this level of care include personal care aides, home care aides, and home health aides. Home health aides might also provide limited assistance with things such as taking blood pressure or offering medication reminders.

## **Health care**

Some health care services can be provided at home by trained professionals, such as occupational therapists, social workers, or home health nurses. Check with your insurance or health service to see what kind of coverage is available, although you may have to cover some cost out of pocket. Hospice care can also be provided at home.



## **Day programs**

Day programs, also called senior daycare, can help you keep busy with activities and socialization during the day, while providing a break for caregivers. Some day programs are primarily social, while others provide limited health services or specialize in disorders such as early stage Alzheimer's.

## **Involving loved ones in home care services**

Everyone has different family structures and support. In deciding your own options, take a look at your own family structure, culture, and the expectations you and family members might have. You may have already made alternate plans, preferring to keep family as little involved as possible. Perhaps you and your family want to work out a system where caregiving by family is your primary support for staying in the home. Or it could be that work, health issues or location of your family may not make this feasible. Your family could live far away and prefer that you live with them or move close instead, which would mean giving up a local support system.

While this conversation may not be easy, it's better to discuss these issues earlier than to wait for an emergency when options may be more limited. An independent opinion, such as a home assessment by a geriatric case manager or consulting with other professionals, can be helpful in defusing family tensions too. You have the final decision as to where you want to live, but input from family members is also helpful. Are they worried about your safety or a health problem such as Alzheimer's that will eventually require heavy care? Listening to concerns and keeping communication open is key.

Even if you have strong family support, be open to the idea of having other help too. Many people have an initial feeling of "not wanting strangers in the house." But caregiving can be physically and emotionally exhausting, especially if it is primarily on one person such as a spouse. Your relationships will be healthier if you are open to the idea of getting help from more than one source.

## **Home Care Program P.E.I.**

The Home Care Program supports you and your caregivers so that you can remain in your home safely, with independence and quality of life, for as long as possible.

### **What can Home Care do for me?**

Home Care can provide services in your home, if you:

- need support to continue living safely at home,
- have been released from hospital and are recovering from surgery or an acute medical condition, or
- have an ongoing health issue requiring more care than you or your family can provide.

### **What services are offered through Home Care?**

Home Care provides a range of health care and support services if you have acute, chronic, palliative or rehabilitative health care needs, including:

- **Nursing care** – nursing procedures including health monitoring, IV therapy, injections, wound care and patient teaching.
- **Home Support** – assistance with daily activities such as bathing and dressing.
- **Palliative care** – comfort and support to live fully until the end of life.
- **Social work** – individual and family counseling for illness, loss or end-of-life issues.
- **Dietitian Services** – nutrition assessment and education.
- **Physiotherapy** – to maximize independence, function and mobility.

- **Occupational therapy** - support for daily living, special devices, equipment or modification to home or workplace.
- [Home Dialysis](#) – supports peritoneal dialysis in your own home.
- [Adult protection](#) – for vulnerable adults who need protection from neglect or abuse.
- [Long-term care](#) – assessment for nursing home admission.
- [Adult Day Programs](#) – enriching social activities for seniors.

#### **How do I access the Home Care Program?**

Services are provided based on assessed need for a defined period of time. A [Home Care Referral form](#) will need to be completed and submitted to your local Home Care Office. A referral can be made by yourself, your family, care provider, or family doctor.

#### **What if I can no longer live in my home?**

If you require a high level of nursing care, Home Care will assess your needs and eligibility for [long-term care](#). Long-term care is provided by several public and private nursing facilities across the province.