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# Planning for Long-Term Care

YOUR RESOURCE GUIDE

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## Why It's Smart to Plan Ahead

*Take a few minutes and picture the next stage of your life. Maybe you're living in your current home and running a part-time business. Perhaps you've moved to a retirement community where you take college courses and volunteer. Or maybe you've chosen to live near your family, so you can be more involved with your grandchildren.*

*Whatever you're doing, you've taken steps to help you live comfortably as you get older. You know your options for getting support and your family understands what you want. In other words, you have a plan.*

When it comes to your home, your health, and your finances, you want to be in the driver's seat. That's why it's so important to plan now for retirement – and any future care you may need. Planning for long-term care is one of the smartest decisions you can make, and it's a gift for your family too.

### **Consider these possible benefits:**

- Having more choices down the road
- Directing the decisions affecting you
- Feeling less overwhelmed in the future
- Being ready to help your family and friends

## *What is long-term care?*

Think of long-term care as the day-to-day help needed by people with illnesses that last a long time (chronic illnesses), disabilities, or other conditions. Some people need long-term care for several months, while others need it for years or a lifetime.

### **Long-term care can include:**

- Changes to your home to make it safer, more comfortable, and easier to get around
- Technology that helps you stay independent
- Help with housekeeping, meals, and personal care like bathing or getting dressed
- Skilled medical care provided by a nurse or other health care professional

Many people receive long-term care at home, much of it provided by family and friends. There are also home and community-based services offered by public and private organizations. Some examples are home-delivered meals, visiting nurses, and supervised programs during the day.

Some people decide it makes sense to move to a different type of living arrangement. For example, retirement communities typically offer services such as maintenance, housekeeping, and dining. Assisted living is an option for people who need help with personal care like bathing or getting dressed. And nursing homes provide around-the-clock care for people with greater health-related needs.

## *Will I need it?*

None of us can predict with absolute certainty whether we'll need long-term care. But, you can learn more about your risk factors by taking the following true-or-false quiz.

### **T/F: Most people age 65 and over will never need long-term care.**

**FALSE** Your odds of needing long-term care generally increase as you get older. More than two-thirds of people over age 65 in 2005 will require at least some type of long-term care during their remaining lifetime.<sup>1</sup> On average, someone age 65 in 2005 will need some long-term care services for three years.<sup>2</sup> The need for care varies widely. Roughly 30 percent of people age 65 and over never need care, while 20 percent need five years or more.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P. Kemper, H. Komisar, and L. Alecxih. "Long Term Care Over an Uncertain Future: What Can Current Retirees Expect?" *Inquiry* (Winter 2005/2006). <sup>2</sup> Ibid. <sup>3</sup> Ibid.

**T/F: Women and men experience the same need for long-term care.**

**FALSE** Women are more likely to need long-term care than men, because they outlive men by an average of five years.<sup>4</sup> They may also find themselves living alone later in life, which increases their chances of needing care from a paid provider.<sup>5</sup> About 80 percent of women over age 65 in 2005 will need care, as opposed to 60 percent of men. And women need an average of 3.7 years of care, while men need 2.2 years of care.<sup>6</sup>

**T/F: Your health can influence your need for long-term care.**

**TRUE** Poor lifestyle choices can raise your risk for a number of chronic conditions. And, severe chronic conditions increase your chances of needing long-term care.<sup>7</sup>

While you can't change your gender or family history, you can focus on a healthy lifestyle. By taking steps to manage risks and plan for potential challenges, you can stay independent longer.

### *Why plan now?*

The best time to plan for long-term care is long before you need it. That way, you're more likely to have choices about how and where you receive care. Planning for long-term care means:

- Assessing whether where you live now will support your changing needs as you get older
- Taking care of yourself to improve your chances for a healthy future
- Knowing the costs of long-term care and learning about ways to cover them
- Creating legal instructions that will help keep you in charge of decisions about your care and finances

By taking these steps, you can map out your own course for the future.

<sup>4</sup> A. Houser. "AARP Public Policy Institute: Women and Long-term Care" (April 2007). <sup>5</sup> Ibid. <sup>6</sup> P. Kemper, H. Komisar, and L. Alecxih. "Long Term Care Over an Uncertain Future: What Can Current Retirees Expect?" *Inquiry* (Winter 2005/2006). <sup>7</sup> AARP Public Policy Institute beyond 50.09. "Chronic Care: A Call to Action for Health Reform" (March 2009).

## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE GUIDE

This guide will help you learn about five areas that will have a major influence on your lifestyle later on.


 **Your Home and Community**

 **Your Health**

 **Your Finances**

 **Your Wishes**

 **Your Voice**

In several parts of the guide, you'll notice a  symbol followed by the words **YOUR NEXT STEP**. This highlights an action you can take today. You'll also see a \* next to organizations that appear in the Long-Term Care Resources section at the end of this guide, where you'll find contact information such as phone numbers and websites.

Some people find it helpful to start a binder to organize papers and to create a file folder on their computer. By using this Resource Guide – and the Long-Term Care Worksheet that goes with it – you'll have the confidence of knowing you're as prepared as possible for the future. You can also find additional tools and resources at [aarp.org/decide](https://aarp.org/decide).

## Your Home and Community

When you're planning for the future, it's important to think about where you want to live. This section offers advice for staying in your home and explores other types of living arrangements.





## STAYING IN YOUR HOME

When asked where they want to grow older, most people say they want to stay in their home as long as possible. If you share this goal, it's important to make sure your home can support your changing needs and lifestyle.

Here are some questions to consider:

**Q:** *Will my home be a good fit if I start to have trouble getting around?*

**A:** As you get older, things like going up and down stairs may eventually become difficult. Your home's design can make a big difference in whether you'll be able to live there comfortably and safely.

It's a good idea to assess your home now, so you can identify potential issues early. That way, you can explore options for fixing problems and budget for any major changes. There are professionals known as Certified Aging-in-Place Specialists\* who can help you with a plan.

Incorporating *universal design* features into your home now can help you continue to live there as you get older or if you develop a disability. A home with universal design also makes it easier for guests to visit, since everyone has different needs and abilities. Many newer homes are built with universal design features, and existing homes can be modified.

Examples of universal design are:

- Entrances without steps
- A bedroom and full bathroom on the first floor
- An open floor plan
- Wider doorways and hallways
- Lower-placed rocker-style light switches and thermostat controls
- Easy-to-use D-shaped cabinet handles and lever-type door and faucet handles

There are other changes you can make – even on a tight budget. For example, to help prevent falls, you can install a seat in the shower, put handrails on both sides of the stairway, install easy-to-use lever door handles, and use brighter, non-glare lights.

## Meet Maria and Antonio



Maria and Antonio live in a beautiful two-story home. They bought their house 20 years ago because it was in the best school district in town. Today, their children are grown and have moved away.

A few months ago, Maria and Antonio had a real eye-opener when Maria slipped on the ice and broke her ankle. Suddenly, simple things like showering and fixing dinner came with a set of obstacles. Her ankle healed, but the experience made them wonder whether their house is a good fit for the long-term.

After a lot of discussion, Maria and Antonio have decided to move. They're going to explore living next to the town center, that has stores, restaurants, and medical offices. Maria and Antonio plan to look for a home with a bedroom and full bathroom on the first floor because it will make life easier in the future, plus they'll be better prepared if one of their parents needs to move in.

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## YOUR NEXT STEP

Get information to help you assess the safety and comfort of your home, or that of a loved one, at [www.aarp.org/homedesign](http://www.aarp.org/homedesign).

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### *Q: How can technology help me get along at home?*

**A:** Technology can help you more easily manage your health, safety, and comfort. Products can help save time, increase mobility and access, and remind us to follow healthy behaviors.

Here are some products already on the market:

- **Email, telephone, or text reminders to take medication**
- **Remote controls that let you adjust your heating and cooling systems or start appliances**
- **Systems that let you lock and unlock your home via your cell phone or computer**
- **Blood pressure and glucose monitors that let you track your numbers online**

People mostly use their own money to pay for new-technology products and services. However, some may be offered by nonprofit organizations for free or at a discount. In addition, government programs and insurers are increasingly covering technology that helps people live independently longer. Learn more about helpful technology at [www.abledata.com](http://www.abledata.com).

### *Q: What community amenities are important to me?*

**A:** A convenient location can make it easier to stay in your home as you get older. It's helpful to live near or have access to essentials such as a grocery store, pharmacy, and your doctor's office. You may also want to be close to activities you enjoy – going to the gym, parks, theaters, community centers, colleges, or your place of worship.

Having a range of transportation options is especially important. Does your community have reliable public transportation or alternative transportation options? Do safe, well-maintained sidewalks connect you to where you want to go? And are the streets designed to accommodate both drivers and walkers? Consider these questions when assessing your community.

### *Q: Does my community provide services to people who need help with daily activities?*

**A:** Many communities have programs and services specifically for people who need help with transportation, meals, bathing, and more. These services may be useful to you down the road – or if you're caring for a relative or friend.

Services can be provided by your local agency on aging, or other public or nonprofit agencies, as well as for-profit companies. Fees vary by service and location, but some may be free or offered on a sliding scale, depending on your income.

**Every community is different, but here are some common programs and services:**

- **Adult day services** are provided at a community setting where people come for several hours a day to receive medical, social, and recreation services. They are usually offered during the daytime, which helps people who may be caring for a loved one while working.
- **Assisted transportation** helps people get to appointments and other necessary places. It can include door-to-door van service, discount taxi programs, and volunteer drivers and escorts.
- **Caregiver services** can include respite (a break from caregiving), information, referrals to services, and training or support groups.
- **Care assessment and management**, most often by a nurse or social worker, can help assess a person’s needs, develop a plan of care, and arrange and monitor services.
- **Friendly visitors** are volunteers who stop by regularly to see how you’re doing.
- **Home care services** provide help with personal care like bathing or getting dressed.
- **Home health care** includes nursing and physical, speech or occupational therapy for a specific condition.
- **Homemaker/chore services** help with housekeeping and preparing meals, or chores like mowing the lawn and shoveling snow.
- **Information and assistance specialists** provide information and connect you to local resources and services.
- **Meals** may be delivered to your home or served in a senior center or community facility.
- **Senior centers** offer meals, recreation, classes, information and referral services, volunteer opportunities, employment services, public benefits counseling, and much more.

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 **YOUR NEXT STEP**

Become familiar with what’s available in your community, or check for services elsewhere for a loved one. Call the Eldercare Locator at **1.800.677.1116** or visit **[www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov)**. You can search for information by ZIP code and find the local office on aging.

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## Q: *How will my family and friends be able to help out?*

**A:** While community services provide valuable help, most people rely primarily on the support of family and friends when they need long-term care. It's a good idea for families to talk through options as early as possible. While it is not always easy to talk with family and friends about such matters, it generally puts everyone at ease to have this type of discussion.

**In general, family and friends can help with things like:**

- **Checking in on you regularly**
- **Grocery shopping**
- **Housekeeping and chores**
- **Meal preparation**
- **Transportation**
- **Personal care**
- **Help with financial matters such as paying bills**

However, keep in mind that circumstances sometimes make it difficult for loved ones to be there as much as they would like. **Now is the perfect time to broaden your support network.** You might consider getting involved in a faith community or a volunteer organization. By volunteering your time now, you can strengthen programs in your area so they will be there for you and others down the road.

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### **YOUR NEXT STEP**

Start discussions with older loved ones about how they envision having others involved with their care. Could they use help with errands, chores, and transportation? Is living together a possibility? Think about how you would want loved ones to be involved in your own care.

Explore volunteer options in your community or check out requests for volunteers at **CreateTheGood.org**.

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Most people want to stay in their homes, but it's not the right choice for everyone. Some people grow tired of keeping up a house and yard. Others prefer the services and amenities that come with certain types of living arrangements. Many also prefer or need the activities and social interaction that come with communities that provide services.

## EXPLORING OTHER LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

### *Q: What are my options?*

*A:* There are a number of different housing options. The right one for you will depend on your preferences, your resources, and how much help you need. You can learn more about these living arrangements by contacting the representative organizations listed in the Resources section of this guide.

- **Living with family** often involves moving in with an adult child. One benefit of this arrangement is the opportunity to connect with grandchildren and other family members. Sometimes it's possible to convert part of the first floor into a suite or add on a private apartment.
- **Home-sharing\*** arrangements with non-family members are growing in popularity. For example, some older couples open their home to a student in exchange for help with meals, housekeeping, and errands. Several programs around the country will match older homeowners with tenants. They run criminal and credit checks on prospective tenants, and help with rental agreements and disputes.
- **55+ active-adult communities** are age-restricted communities that offer resort-style amenities. Some communities require that you purchase a home or condo, while others offer rental agreements. Many are built with universal design features to create a safer, more comfortable living environment. However, they typically do not offer ongoing supportive services like group dining.
- **Retirement communities and senior apartments** are for people who can live on their own but want services such as maintenance, housekeeping, and group dining. Newer communities are often built with universal design features. Some communities have amenities like fitness centers and restaurants and offer a range of social activities and transportation. However, they typically do not provide assistance with personal care or health services.
- **Adult foster care** in family-like settings can provide room and board, and some assistance such as medication reminders, transportation, and laundry, for people who need help with independent living. Some homes provide or coordinate more complex care for people with additional support needs.

- **Continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs)** provide independent living, assisted living, and skilled nursing care, all in one location. Many CCRCs also have amenities like restaurants, fitness centers, and theaters. They offer an active lifestyle with the security of knowing that additional support is available if needed. When residents move in, they sign a contract outlining what services are available and at what cost. These contracts vary widely, and residents can often choose from different options.
- **Government-supported housing** is available to older people and people with disabilities who have limited incomes and assets. The apartments have features like bathroom railings and 24-hour emergency call service. Some facilities also provide meals, transportation, and social programs. Waiting lists are common. In some communities, rental assistance and care management services are available to eligible older people through the HOPE for Elderly Independence Program. To find out if you qualify, check with your local housing office.\*
- **Assisted living** includes a wide range of residential settings for people who need support with independent living. Residences offer help with meals, laundry, and housekeeping and also provide help with personal care like bathing, getting dressed, or taking medications. Commonly, each resident has a service plan tailored for their care needs, and staff members are on-site 24 hours a day. There are no federal regulations. Each state develops its own regulations including the frequency of inspections.
- **Nursing homes** provide skilled nursing care and rehabilitation services to people with illnesses, injuries, or disabilities. They typically serve people who need extensive, around-the-clock care. A nursing home provides meals, personal care, administration of medications, and medical care. Medicare\* has an online tool that can help you find and compare nursing homes in your area.

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## YOUR NEXT STEP

Think about what might be important to you in the future. Is it being near family, having services in one location, or both? Then, consider which arrangements make the most sense at each life stage.



**Q:** *How do I find a good place?*

**A:** Planning for where to live is a big decision, and it’s important to do your homework. Below are some general tips to keep in mind whether you’re considering a new single-family home, an apartment, or a senior community. You can find detailed checklists for choosing an assisted living residence or nursing home at [www.aarp.org/caregivers](http://www.aarp.org/caregivers).

- Start by determining what’s important to you (location, must-have amenities and services, religious affiliation).
- Check for accreditation, licensure, and other certifications. Only certain housing types are required to have these credentials.
- Research local options online and read what others are saying about them.
- Ask friends, leaders in the faith community, and colleagues about their experiences.
- Visit several places for yourself, talk with the people who live there, and find out whether you can connect with a residents’ association. Association members can share their experiences about working with management to make improvements and resolve complaints.
- Ask about ownership and financial solvency. Review the financial history with a trusted adviser.
- Inquire about the qualifications, training, and availability of staff.

The earlier you start planning, the more choices you’ll have down the road about where to live.

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## Your Health

Maintaining your health has a lot to do with your ability to live independently later on. This section offers tips for assessing health risks, staying healthy, and caring for yourself if you're caring for a loved one.





## GOOD REASONS TO STAY HEALTHY

A healthy lifestyle is about taking positive steps to prevent disease and manage any ongoing conditions. In this section, we discuss specific ways you can increase your chances for a healthy future.

Living an active, healthy lifestyle can also bring plenty of immediate benefits.

### You can:

- **Have more energy**
- **Lower your blood pressure**
- **Sleep better**
- **Reduce tension and stress**
- **Reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and some cancers**
- **Set a good example for your family and friends**

### **Q:** *Why is it important to know your family's health history?*

**A:** Your family's health history can give you important clues about problems you may eventually encounter. While you can't change history, you can take steps to keep it from repeating itself. Your doctor may recommend early or more frequent screenings and suggest lifestyle changes to keep you healthy.

To help you get organized, the U.S. Surgeon General's Office has an Internet-based tool called My Family Health Portrait. You can enter your family's health history, print out a family tree for your doctor and – if you want to – share the information with other family members.

### **▶ YOUR NEXT STEP**

Create a family health history at [www.familyhistory.hhs.gov](http://www.familyhistory.hhs.gov).

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## Meet Tonya



Like many women in their 50s, Tonya has a full plate. She manages a finance department, teaches Sunday school, and babysits her grandson. And ever since Tonya's mom had a stroke last year, she's been helping her dad.

A few weeks ago, Tonya went to the doctor because she felt rundown. When the nurse asked for her family medical history, she realized she didn't know a lot. The doctor mentioned concerns about her blood sugar and weight. Tonya barely has time for everyone else – let alone herself – but she knows she needs to make some changes.

After Tonya discovered she was at risk for developing diabetes, she started taking steps to improve her health. She now walks three days a week with co-workers during her lunch break and packs her lunch to avoid fast-food. She also joined an online caregiver support group, which offers advice and encouragement.

## *Q: What screenings and shots do adults need?*

**A:** The government has developed guidelines for recommended screenings for women and men in different age groups. Common tests include those for cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes, and depression. The government also recommends certain immunizations for adults, like the flu shot and pneumonia shot.

A lot of people shy away from screenings because they're afraid of getting bad news. But screening tests can catch diseases early, when they are easier to treat.

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### **YOUR NEXT STEP**

Get a personalized screening chart to discuss with your doctor. Women can find one at [www.aarp.org/womenchecklist](http://www.aarp.org/womenchecklist). Men can go to [www.aarp.org/menchecklist](http://www.aarp.org/menchecklist).

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## *Q: How can I stay on top of all my medications?*

**A:** Most adults age 45 and older take an average of four prescription drugs daily. And that's in addition to any vitamins, supplements, or over-the-counter medicines. When it comes to avoiding dangerous side effects, you need to be your own best advocate.

A good place to start is by creating a personal medication record. It should have the names of all your medicines, including prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, and any dietary supplements you take. It should also include how medicines are taken, how much and when as well as why you take them, their form (pill, liquid, etc.), dosage, and start and stop dates. Take a copy of the record to all of your doctors and any pharmacies you use. Make a copy for your loved ones.

When you're at the doctor, don't hesitate to ask questions about why you're taking a particular medicine. What is it supposed to do? Are there side effects? Do you have any alternatives? Will this medication work safely with the other medications you're taking? Is there a similarly effective, lower-cost brand name or generic drug? AARP has tools that can help you do research on your own.

## YOUR NEXT STEPS

Create a personal medication record at [www.aarp.org/medicationrecord](http://www.aarp.org/medicationrecord) or call AARP at **1.888.OUR.AARP** and ask for publication D18358.

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**Q:** *How do I know what actions will truly make a difference in my health?*

**A:** The bolded recommendations below, which are based on research findings, come from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an independent panel of experts in primary care and prevention who offer these ways to increase your odds of a healthy future.

**Here are some things you can do every day:**

- **Don't smoke.** Studies show that people who don't smoke are at lower risk for lung cancer, heart disease, stroke, and more.
- **Be physically active.** If you are not already physically active, start small and work up to 150 minutes or more of moderate physical activity each week. Walking briskly, mowing the lawn, dancing, and swimming are just a few examples of moderate physical activity. Try to include activities to strengthen your muscles and bones at least two days a week. Exercising helps prevent diabetes and heart disease. It can help you stay at or get to a healthy weight. It can fight depression and may even help keep your brain fit too.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products. Include lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts. Try to focus on eating lean and natural foods that are low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt, and added sugars. And cut back on processed, pre-packaged foods.
- **Stay at a healthy weight.** Know your healthy weight range and how many calories you need. Then, start making small changes to your diet and lifestyle. Balance the calories you take in from food and drink with the calories you burn off during your activities.
- **Drink alcohol in moderation.** If you drink, try to limit yourself to one drink a day. A standard drink is one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of spirits (gin, vodka, whiskey, etc.).

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## YOUR NEXT STEPS

Start a walking routine with AARP's Step Up to Better Health program at [www.aarp.stepuptobetterhealth.com](http://www.aarp.stepuptobetterhealth.com).

Or track your exercise minutes with AARP's Get Fit on Route 66 game at <http://aarp.getfitonroute66.com>.

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When you have the facts, you can do plenty to improve your health now and in the future. And each healthy choice you make increases your chances of living the retirement lifestyle you want.

## CARING FOR YOURSELF WHEN YOU'RE A CAREGIVER

Maintaining your health can be even more challenging when you're caring for others. You may already be one of the millions of Americans caring for a relative or friend – and possibly your children, too. And if you aren't a caregiver now, there's a good chance you will be at some point.

While caregiving can be very rewarding, it is also demanding and stressful. A study by the National Alliance for Caregiving and AARP found that more than half of those who provide extensive care for parents experience stress and strain.

### Here are some tips for managing stress and getting support:

- **Keep up your health.** As hard as it seems, try to eat properly and make time for adequate sleep and exercise. Resist the urge to overindulge in sweets or alcohol.
- **Unwind with friends.** It's important to maintain your social contacts, because isolation increases stress.
- **Deal constructively with negative feelings.** Focus on positives, resolve conflicts quickly, and change things when feeling resentful. Consider joining a caregiver support group or online community. Join AARP's online caregiver community at [www.aarp.org/caregiving](http://www.aarp.org/caregiving).
- **Get family and friends involved.** Check with family, friends, neighbors, or other social networks about how they might be able to help. If other family members can't be there in person, ask them to help look into support options or contribute financially.
- **Explore community services.** Most communities have information, services, and support for caregivers. The best place to inquire is through the Eldercare Locator.\* In some communities, volunteers from faith-based organizations or nonprofit groups might visit or help with driving and chores.

- **Seek professional help with care coordination.** Most communities have professionals who can gauge your loved one’s abilities and needs and set up a plan for care. You can find this assistance through government-funded programs by using the Eldercare Locator.\* Another option is to hire a private geriatric care manager. A number of employers are starting to pay for these services and, if your family member has long-term care insurance, this might be covered under the policy. For a list of local professionals, visit the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers\* or the National Association of Social Workers.\*
- **Talk to your employer.** Some companies offer their employees counseling, caregiver support groups, or financial assistance toward community services. You may also be able to work out a temporary arrangement such as flex time, job-sharing, or telecommuting.
- **Take a break.** And don’t feel guilty about it. Remember that your loved one may also benefit from having someone else around. Try to arrange for respite care (a break) with the help of friends, family, volunteers, or, if necessary, professional caregivers.



### YOUR NEXT STEPS

Get help caring for your loved one – and for yourself – at [www.aarp.org/caregivers](http://www.aarp.org/caregivers).

Be better prepared for helping your parents or other loved ones by ordering *Prepare to Care* (D 18758) from **1.888.OUR.AARP** or find it online at [www.aarp.org/preparetocare](http://www.aarp.org/preparetocare).



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## Your Finances

One of the most important parts of planning for long-term care is figuring out how to pay for it. This section will give you an idea of the cost of some common long-term care options and provides some financial strategies to help you reach your goal. You'll learn what is – and isn't – covered by the government and different types of insurance.



## PAYING FOR LONG-TERM CARE

Did you know family and friends provide about 80 percent of the long-term care people receive at home? But when it becomes necessary to hire paid caregivers or to move to a different living arrangement, care can get expensive quickly. The following information gives you an idea of the national average costs of long-term care today and explores financial strategies for paying for it.

### **Q:** *What does long-term care cost?*

**A:** The cost of long-term care usually depends on four main factors: where you live, the type of care you need, how much care you need, and how long you need it.

In a previous section, you learned about different types of living arrangements and services.

**Here are some national average costs for 2009, according to a market study conducted by Genworth Financial:**

- **\$203 per day** for a private room in a nursing home
- **\$183 per day** for a semi-private room in a nursing home
- **\$2,900 per month** for care in an assisted living facility (for a one-bedroom unit)
- **\$54 per day** for care in an adult day health care center
- **\$19 per hour** for a home health aide (non-Medicare certified)
- **\$17 per hour** for homemaker services

These costs vary tremendously by where you live. If you're in Mississippi, the average cost per day in 2009 for a private room in a nursing home was \$180. In New York City, however, the cost was \$364 per day.

### **▶ YOUR NEXT STEP**

Use AARP's Long-Term Care Cost Calculator to estimate the costs of care near you. Visit [www.aarp.org/longtermcarecosts](http://www.aarp.org/longtermcarecosts).

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## *Meet Kathy and Jim*



When Jim's mom started having memory problems, his wife Kathy agreed to have her move in with them. The arrangement worked well, until his mom couldn't be left alone during the day.

Kathy and Jim found a weekly program for Jim's mom where they monitor her medical condition while she spends time with others. They've hired someone to help her bathe and get dressed each morning. Unfortunately, Medicare doesn't cover these costs and they are running through her money quickly. They want to make sure, if they ever need care, they'll be a lot better prepared.

Caring for Jim's mom has prompted Kathy and Jim to do more to save for their own future. They met with a financial planner, set some goals, and started making automatic savings deductions from their paychecks. They have a better idea of what long-term care costs, and they're doing what they can to prepare.

## MORE ON MEDICARE

Medicare\* can cover up to 100 days in a nursing facility if you meet very strict conditions:

- You must need daily skilled nursing or rehabilitative care – not just personal care.
- The care must be provided in a Medicare-certified facility after you've been hospitalized with a related condition for at least three days.
- You must typically go to the nursing home within 30 days of the related hospitalization.

Even if you meet all of those criteria, Medicare will pay 100 percent only for the first 20 days. For days 21 through 100, you will face significant co-payments, unless you have supplemental insurance. After that, you pay all costs unless you're eligible for Medicaid or have long-term care insurance.

Medicare also helps pay for some home health care. However, there are several restrictions. Medicare will pay only if:

- You need skilled care from a nurse or therapist.
- You're homebound, which means you need significant assistance to leave your home.
- The care is part time or intermittent.
- Your doctor orders it.
- You receive services from a Medicare-certified home health agency.

## Q: *Doesn't Medicare pay for long-term care?*

**A:** This is one of the biggest myths when it comes to long-term care! The reality is that Medicare covers few – if any – long-term care expenses. And Medicare pays nothing if you only need personal care like help in bathing or getting dressed. (see sidebar on this page)

## Q: *What about Medicaid?*

**A:** Medicaid is the largest payer of long-term care services in the United States. It is a federal and state program that helps certain groups of people with low incomes and assets pay their medical and long-term care bills. Coverage varies from state to state.

People need to meet strict financial, health, and functional ability criteria to receive long-term care services under Medicaid. Check with your local Medicaid office, which is listed in the blue pages of your phone directory to determine if you are eligible. (see sidebar on page 23)

## Q: *Do other government programs pay for long-term care?*

**A:** **Community-based government programs** offer a number of services that help people stay in their homes. These may include home-delivered meals, transportation, caregiver support, and help with household chores. Many of these services are funded through the federal Older Americans Act, but state and local governments also fund and provide services. While some programs are available in most communities, others can be unique to a certain state or area. In some communities, there are waiting lists for services or limited amounts of support available. Find services through the Eldercare Locator.\*

**The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)\*** provides a range of extended care services to veterans enrolled in its health care system. All veterans are eligible for home and community-based care if they meet the VA criteria. Care outside an institution can include a variety of services, for example, adult day health care, homemaker and home health aide services, home respite care, and home hospice care. Specific eligibility and admission criteria are unique to each type of nursing home care available through the VA, but most require the veteran to have a disability related to their time of service. Veterans



who require nursing home care for any non-service-related disabilities and who meet income and asset criteria are eligible for VA Community Living Centers (formerly known as VA Nursing Homes) on a resource-available basis.

### YOUR NEXT STEP

- ▶ Learn more about public benefits that may be available to you or someone you care about at AARP’s Benefits QuickLINK. Go to [www.aarp.org/quickLINK](http://www.aarp.org/quickLINK). By filling out a confidential online questionnaire, you’ll get a list of programs that you may be eligible for and information on how to apply.

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### Q: *What other types of help are available?*

**A:** Faith-based organizations and health-related groups often offer free or low-cost services like transportation, home visitors, and support groups. Call your place of worship or contact the local chapter of organizations such as the American Diabetes Association ([www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)) or the Alzheimer’s Association ([www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)).

### Q: *What about health insurance, disability insurance, and Medigap?*

**A:** Many people are confused about what these types of insurance cover.

**Here are the facts:**

- **Private health insurance** covers hospital stays, outpatient services, doctor’s visits and – depending on the carrier and selected plan – prescription drugs. Similar to Medicare, it usually pays for short-term rehabilitative services. It does not pay for the ongoing long-term care you may need for a long-term, chronic illness or disability.

### MORE ON MEDICAID

Every state is required to provide nursing home care to eligible people. Care must be provided in facilities certified by the government to serve people with Medicaid coverage. To some extent, each state provides in-home and community-based services, as well. However, even though most people prefer to receive care at home, the majority of Medicaid dollars currently fund institutional care such as nursing homes. The balance is starting to shift, but many states still have long waiting lists for in-home and community services.

Most states allow Medicaid long-term care recipients to keep roughly \$2,000 in liquid assets (not counting their home and a vehicle). But there are important stipulations about financial protection for spouses and dependents, estate recovery, and transferring assets.

Contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program\* for further assistance. Sometimes, people find it helpful to speak with a knowledgeable local attorney or financial adviser. Check with the Eldercare Locator\* to find legal services programs in your community, or contact the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys\* to find a private lawyer.

In some states, government programs such as Medicaid are beginning to offer eligible participants new options for home care. This may include a regular allowance that they can use to decide for themselves which goods and services will best meet their long-term care needs. In some programs, participants are allowed to hire family members or friends to provide needed care. Learn about these programs at [www.cashandcounseling.org](http://www.cashandcounseling.org). ■

- **Disability insurance** replaces a portion of your income if an injury or illness makes it impossible to work. It's designed to cover expenses such as the mortgage and food, which are typically covered by your salary. Disability insurance does not pay for the extra care and services needed while disabled.
- **Medigap policies** (also known as Medicare supplemental insurance) are designed to cover "gaps" in Medicare, like co-payments and deductibles. Depending on the policy you buy, it can cover the co-pays for up to 100 days of skilled nursing home care. But like Medicare, it does not provide coverage for the vast majority of long-term care expenses.

### **Q: *What are some financial strategies for covering long-term care?***

**A:** Being able to cover the costs of long-term care with your own resources can help increase your choices about how and where you receive care. There are a number of private financing strategies you can use. The right combination for you will depend on factors like your age, health, finances, and support network.

- **Retirement income, savings, and investments** are how most people who are not on Medicaid pay for long-term care. These resources could include Social Security, pensions, 401(k) plans, IRAs, stocks, bonds, and annuities. Investments are particularly important, since savings alone won't keep up with annual cost increases. AARP's long-term care cost calculator ([www.aarp.org/longtermcarecosts](http://www.aarp.org/longtermcarecosts)) tracks the annual percentage increase for specific services in your area. It can help you determine how much money you need today and the typical rate of increase in investments you would need to cover future costs.
- **Long-term care insurance** is designed specifically to cover some of the costs of long-term care. Depending on the policy you buy, it can cover care at home, in an assisted living facility, or in a nursing home. But it's important to do your homework, as there are many options to choose from. Read the details of the plan carefully, and ask a lot of questions. Find impartial but informed sources who can answer them. (see page 27 for further information)
- **Continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs)** provide independent living, assisted living, and nursing care, all in one location. While it's becoming less common, some CCRCs also offer a life care agreement. With a life care agreement, you pay a large entry fee in addition to a regular monthly fee. The entry fee generally guarantees that your monthly fee will stay about the same, even as you need more care. Review the contract carefully with a trusted financial or legal adviser to be confident that the community will be financially viable for a long time and that you understand all the costs involved.
- **Life insurance** policies can provide cash to pay for long-term care. Depending on your policy, you may be able to borrow or withdraw money while still keeping the policy. Many policies also allow people with terminal illnesses to access some of their death benefits early. But it's important to understand how your decision could affect your taxes, any public assistance you receive, and access to your personal health information. Consult an independent financial adviser before making any decisions.

- **Reverse mortgages** allow you to tap into your home’s equity to pay for long-term care in your home or other needs. A reverse mortgage is a loan against your home that you don’t have to pay back as long as you live there. But these loans are complicated and can have high costs, so talk with a financial adviser. It is not advisable to use proceeds from a reverse mortgage to pay for long-term care insurance because of the high costs involved. To find out more about reverse mortgages check out [www.aarp.org/revmort](http://www.aarp.org/revmort).

 **YOUR NEXT STEP**

Go to AARP’s Retirement Calculator to see how much income your retirement savings might provide at [www.aarp.org/money](http://www.aarp.org/money).

Long-term care can be expensive, so it’s important to plan ahead for costs. Create a financial strategy for long-term care that is right for you.



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**FINDING A FINANCIAL PROFESSIONAL**

Given the range of strategies for financing long-term care, many people find it helpful to consult a financial professional. It’s important to know which type of professional will fit your needs – and how to find someone you can trust. Several organizations that can help connect you with an appropriate professional are listed in the Resources section of this guide.

- **Financial planners** assess every aspect of your financial life, including your savings, investments, insurance, taxes, retirement, and estate planning, to make recommendations about how to reach your financial goals.
- **Investment advisers** focus specifically on managing your investments. To find information about advisers, visit [www.adviserinfo.sec.gov](http://www.adviserinfo.sec.gov).

- **Insurance agents** can help you sort through options for life insurance, annuities, and long-term care insurance. You can find agents through your state insurance commission.
- **Estate planning attorneys** can draft legal documents such as a will, a financial power of attorney, or advance directives. They can also develop tax-efficient strategies for passing on your estate.

With any of these professionals, you'll want to do your research before deciding to employ one.

- Begin by getting referrals from family, friends, and colleagues. You can also use the websites in the Resources section as a starting point.
- Request interviews with at least three different professionals. If they do not offer a free initial meeting, cross their names off your list.
- Arrive at the appointment with a list of questions. What services do you offer? What degrees, licenses, and certifications do you hold? What is your specialty?
- Make sure you understand how the person gets paid. Financial professionals charge for their services in a variety of ways, including hourly rates, flat fees, percentage of assets managed, or commission. (Keep in mind that some professionals who earn commissions may not have your best interests at heart.)
- Consider whether you feel comfortable with the person. A good financial professional welcomes questions and can explain answers clearly.
- Request client references and check them. How long have they used the person? What do they like most – and least? Would they recommend the person to a family member?
- Verify the person's credentials with the appropriate regulating or certifying organization. You can do this through professional associations\* and licensing agencies.

Remember that you are hiring someone to help you plan for your future. This is no time to be shy. To learn more about working with a financial professional, visit [www.aarp.org/money](http://www.aarp.org/money).

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## Long-Term Care Insurance: JUST THE FACTS

Long-term care insurance is one strategy for covering some of the costs of long-term care. But there is a lot to consider before you decide whether it's right for you.

### *What does it cover?*

Depending on what you select, a policy can cover home care, home modifications, services that help coordinate your care, adult day services, assisted living, and nursing home care.

### *How much does it cost?*

Premiums are based on the type of coverage you buy and the age at which you buy the policy. Below is the average annual cost (in 2008) for policies sold by three major insurers. The policies provide a daily benefit of \$150 and five years of coverage.

- \$2,050 for a 40-year-old
- \$3,109 for a 60-year-old
- \$2,306 for a 50-year-old
- \$6,007 for a 70-year-old

### *Am I a good candidate?*

The best time to purchase long-term care insurance is when you're young and healthy. If you're older or have a serious condition, it will be difficult to find or qualify for an affordable policy.

Think about whether you'll be able to pay your premiums – both now and for the next 20 years. If the premiums are higher than 10 percent of your retirement income, long-term care insurance may be unaffordable. And if you have substantial assets, it might make more sense to self-insure. Talk to a financial adviser about the best option for you.

### *What should I ask about?*

Here are some questions to consider when determining if long-term insurance is right for you:

- *What services are covered? In what settings? What about future models of care?*
- *Can I hire in-home caregivers myself, or do I need to go through an agency?*
- *How much will the policy pay?*
- *How do I qualify for benefits?*
- *When will benefits begin?*
- *Will benefits keep pace with inflation?*
- *How often and by how much have premiums increased?*
- *Could I afford the increase?*
- *What if I can't pay premiums any longer?*

- *Will I still need to pay premiums once I start receiving benefits?*
- *Can the company cancel my policy?*
- *Under what conditions will the company deny coverage (known as coverage exclusions)?*

### *How do I get started?*

- Ask your state insurance department for a list of approved long-term care insurers.
- Research the financial stability of the companies you're considering with a rating service like Standard & Poors ([www.standardandpoors.com](http://www.standardandpoors.com)), A.M. Best ([www.ambest.com](http://www.ambest.com)), or Moody's Investors Service ([www.moody.com](http://www.moody.com)).
- Compare information and costs from at least three major companies, including any rate increases.
- Contact your State Health Insurance Assistance Program\* for free counseling if you have additional questions.

### *What should I keep in mind?*

- Don't buy more than one policy. Owning several policies is expensive and doesn't necessarily provide better coverage.
- Never let anyone pressure you into making a quick decision.
- Never pay any insurance premium in cash and always make your check payable to the company.
- Nearly all states require insurance companies to give you 30 days to review your signed policy. During this time, you can return a policy for a full refund if you change your mind.
- Contact your state insurance department if you have questions or concerns.
- Make sure the policy will cover you if you move to another state.
- About 40 states now have partnerships with private long-term care insurers. If you purchase a designated long-term care policy, you can keep more of your assets if you exhaust the policy and need Medicaid. Generally, you can keep \$1 in assets for every dollar of coverage purchased. You must meet Medicaid's other criteria, too. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners\* publishes a helpful Shopper's Guide to Long-Term Care Insurance. ■

## Your Wishes

Your family shouldn't have to guess your intentions if you're ever not able to tell them yourself. This section discusses important documents every adult should have.



## HELP FOR YOUR FAMILY

Planning for your future also means making decisions about how you would want things handled if you're ever unable to communicate. That way, your family won't have to guess about your intentions during an already difficult time. It's important for people of all ages to be prepared, because medical emergencies can happen to anyone.

We'll get you started in preparing four documents every adult should have: a living will, a health care power of attorney, a financial power of attorney, and a letter of instruction. We'll also help you organize your other important papers, so they're easy to find in a crisis.

### **Q:** *How can I stay in charge of decisions about my medical care?*

**A:** It's important to think about what you want and to put your wishes in writing.

**You can do this by using two types of legal instructions known as advance directives:**

- **A living will** tells medical professionals and your family which medical treatments you want to receive or refuse – and under what conditions. It goes into effect only if you meet specific medical criteria and are unable to make decisions on your own.
- **A health care power of attorney** allows you to appoint someone to make health care decisions for you anytime you're unable to do so. Most people choose a trusted family member or friend who is comfortable talking to doctors. The specific form can also be referred to as a health care proxy, appointment of a health care agent, or durable power of attorney for health care.

### **Q:** *Where can I find these documents?*

**A:** Even though advance directives are legal documents, it's not necessary for a lawyer to write them. Five Wishes, offered by Aging with Dignity,\* is a good model for a living will and health care power of attorney. It's considered legally valid in 40 states, and people in other states often use it as a starting point. Some people prefer to use an attorney to help them draft these documents, so there will be someone keeping an eye on changing regulations. Attorneys typically charge fixed rates for preparing documents, so it should be fairly easy to find an affordable lawyer. The American Bar Association\* maintains a list of free and low-cost legal services in each state.

## Meet Karen



Karen just delivered a home-cooked meal to her friend Ann who had spent most of the week at the hospital after her mom suffered a major stroke. "It's awful," Ann told Karen. "I can't imagine Mom spending months just lying there totally unresponsive and hooked up to machines, but none of us know what Mom really wants. She was never willing to talk about these things." As Karen drove home, she realized she had no idea what her own parents would want – or even her husband.

Ann's situation motivated Karen and her husband to meet with their lawyer. They want their attorney to review the advance directives they've drafted and to complete a financial power of attorney form. On Saturday, they have plans to baby-sit their grandchildren. They've told their daughter and son-in-law that they plan to stay afterward, so they can share their wishes while the kids are asleep.

Whether you consult an attorney or prepare these forms on your own, it's a good idea to talk with your doctor. He or she can answer questions you may have about life-sustaining treatments or other medical issues and terms.

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**▶ YOUR NEXT STEP**

Find advance directive forms for your state at [www.aarp.org/caregiving](http://www.aarp.org/caregiving).



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**Q: *What about my financial affairs?***

**A:** Separate from advance directives, you'll need to make provisions for how you want your finances handled if you're unable to do so. Most experts agree it's important to have this type of instruction prepared by a lawyer.

- **A financial power of attorney document** identifies the person you want to be responsible for handling your financial matters should you be unable to do so. You'll want to choose someone you trust completely – and who is good at managing money.

It's a good idea to prepare a financial power of attorney, even if you're married or have limited income and assets. Otherwise, if you become incapacitated, your family may have to go through an expensive and time-consuming court action to appoint a guardian or conservator.

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**▶ YOUR NEXT STEP**

Think about the best choice for your financial power of attorney and talk with a lawyer.

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## Q: *How do I get organized?*

**A:** In addition to preparing advance directives and a financial power of attorney, it's helpful to organize your personal and financial papers. People often prepare a letter of instruction, which tells family members how to find important information.

- **A letter of instruction** is a three-part personal letter that goes along with your will. The first part includes instructions for planning a funeral and names of people to contact when you die. The second part covers financial affairs such as lists of accounts and phone numbers for your employer, insurance agent, or broker. In the final part, people often name who they want to receive specific personal items and write special messages to family members. Since a letter of instruction is not a legal document, it doesn't have the same legal impact as your official will in distributing your personal property. But it can go a long way in eliminating family discord over mementos, photo albums, and other personal items that may be hard to divide among your survivors without your guidance. You don't need a lawyer to draft the letter, and you can modify it as your circumstances or wishes change.

### **YOUR NEXT STEP**

Complete the “Valuable Documents at Your Fingertips” worksheet at the end of this guide.  
Draft a letter of instruction and attach the worksheet.

## Q: *What's next?*

**A:** Preparing instructions for your loved ones is very important, but what you do with them matters most.

- Talk about your wishes with your family members and trusted friends. You can set an example for adult children or reluctant relatives. Sometimes, it may be difficult or awkward to start the conversation. Sharing your beliefs and values can help set the right tone for the dialogue.
- Keep a copy of all four documents – your living will, health care power of attorney, financial power of attorney, and letter of instruction – in a safe, accessible place. Tell family members and friends where to find them should an emergency arise.
- Go over the appropriate documents with your designated health care agent and financial power of attorney. Discuss any concerns, and make sure they have copies.
- Discuss advance directives with your doctor, and have a copy of them placed in your medical record. If your doctor seems uncomfortable following your wishes, consider changing health care providers.
- Review your advance directives, financial power of attorney, and letter of instruction every few years. These are tough issues, and your views may shift as your health or circumstances change. You can change your mind and your directives at any time.

Planning for the unknown is never easy. But having these conversations and putting your wishes in writing will help you stay in charge of decisions about your life. It's a gift for yourself and your loved ones.

## Your Voice

Getting the help you need often requires speaking up. In this section, we discuss how to be an advocate.

### CARE TODAY

Throughout this guide, you learned about a number of options concerning long-term care and services. However, the United States still lacks a comprehensive approach for providing quality, affordable care to people of all ages with disabilities or other long-term health issues.

**Q:** *How can I be a better advocate for myself and those I care about?*

**A:** Here are some tips to keep in mind when you're seeking help for yourself or a loved one:

- **Know what you want.** Try to describe your situation concisely. Be as specific as possible in asking for what you need. Write down questions you want answered and push for a workable solution to problems and issues.
- **Take notes.** Write down the date, the name of the person you spoke with, the specific outcomes agreed upon, and when the next steps will be taken. That way, you'll have all the necessary information if you need to follow up.
- **Ask questions.** And if you don't understand the answer, ask the person to explain again. This is important whether you're talking to a care provider, contractor, physician, financial adviser, or attorney. Then, clarify what you heard by restating the information.
- **Know your rights.** If you're not satisfied with a decision, find out who makes the decisions and insist on speaking with that person. Always ask if you have the right to appeal and whether a copy of those rights will be provided to you.
- **Reach out.** Talk to family, friends, and community leaders who may have had similar experiences. Ask for their suggestions and whether they can intercede on your behalf. Ombudsmen are available to help people who have problems with nursing homes and other facilities. Larger agencies also may have advocates who help consumers.
- **Speak up.** File a formal complaint, if warranted, with the appropriate government agency or association representing the profession or business.
- **Take action.** If you fear for the immediate safety and well-being of a loved one, call local authorities.
- **Pass it on.** Share what you learn with friends and family. Your research can give them a head start on their own long-term care planning.

## Q: *What can I do to improve long-term care for everyone?*

**A:** Join AARP and other organizations that are working to improve the quality of care and expand access to affordable long-term care options. Help ensure your community will have quality services when you need them by getting involved today.

### Here are a few ways to get active:

- **Join local task forces.** Work with others to improve your community’s ability to serve citizens with varying needs and abilities.
- **Speak with local leaders.** Share information and your personal experiences with leaders in your community.
- **Educate others.** Seek opportunities through the news media and other channels to inform the public about long-term care in your community.
- **Help people find financial assistance.** Assist people in accessing programs and services for which they are eligible.

### By working together, we can:

- **Create communities** designed for people of all ages.
- **Increase community services** and coordination of care to help people stay in their homes.
- **Provide support** for family caregivers.
- **Improve the quality** of all types of long-term care.

## YOUR NEXT STEP

Call your AARP state office at **1.888.OUR.AARP** or visit online at **[www.aarp.org/states](http://www.aarp.org/states)**.

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## Your Future

*Planning for long-term care puts you in the driver's seat for decisions about how and where you receive care. It's about making lifestyle, financial, and legal choices now to steer yourself toward the future you want. The sooner you get started, the smoother the journey will be!*

### LEARN MORE

Whether you're helping someone who needs long-term care now or planning for your future, AARP has tools and information to assist you.

- ▶ Visit [www.aarp.org/decide](http://www.aarp.org/decide)
- ▶ Call 1.888.OUR.AARP (1.888.687.2277)  
or TTY 1.877.434.7598.
- ▶ Find your state AARP office at [www.aarp.org/states](http://www.aarp.org/states).
- ▶ Learn about public benefits for yourself or a loved one at AARP's Benefits QuickLink at [www.aarp.org/quickLINK](http://www.aarp.org/quickLINK).

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# Your Long-Term Care Worksheet

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When it comes to your home, your health, and your finances, you want to be in the driver's seat. This tool helps you take steps now that will make it easier to live comfortably as you get older. Planning for long-term care is one of the smartest decisions you can make, and it's a gift for your family too.

## USE THIS WORKSHEET TO:

- ✔ *Evaluate your options*
- ✔ *Keep notes on your research*
- ✔ *Document the steps you've taken*

Once you've finished, keep the worksheet someplace where you can go back to it from time to time. After all, your life is always changing, so your long-term plans can change, too.

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## Your Home and Community

Like most people, you probably want to live independently as long as you can. It may make sense to stay in your current home, or look for another home with a different floor plan. You could consider moving closer to family, or into a housing community that offers maintenance and amenities. Use the information below to decide what's best for you.

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### Home Design

- ✔ Learn about *universal design* features that make your home safer and more comfortable for you and your guests on **Page 7** of the Resource Guide. Print a checklist from [aarp.org/housingdesign](http://aarp.org/housingdesign) to see how well your current home – or any place you're considering – will meet your needs.

*What parts of the home could create obstacles down the road?*

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### Community Resources

- ✔ Think about whether your home is convenient to what's important to you:

Grocery Store	YES	NO
Pharmacy	YES	NO
Medical Care	YES	NO
Place of Worship	YES	NO
Fitness Center	YES	NO
Dining/Shopping/Recreation	YES	NO
Work	YES	NO
Family/Friends	YES	NO

*Are there transportation alternatives to driving?*

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- ✔ Become better acquainted with services. Find out about supportive programs and services near you for an older friend or relative. Call **1.800.677.1116** or visit **eldercare.gov**.

Name of local department on aging: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

## Support Network

- ✔ Start discussions with older loved ones about how they envision having others involved with their care. *Could they use help with errands, chores, and transportation? Is living together a possibility?*

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- ✔ Think about how you would want loved ones to be involved in your own care.

 WHAT I WOULD LIKE FOR MYSELF:

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## Other Living Arrangements

Although many people want to stay in their own home, it may not be the right choice for everyone. Some people grow tired of keeping up a house. Others want the services, amenities, or help with personal care that are included as part of a package of services.

- ✔ Learn about other living arrangements like home sharing, senior housing communities, continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs), assisted living, and nursing homes. See **Page 11** of the Resource Guide or visit **aarp.org/caregivers**.

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- ✔ Consider what makes a place feel like home for you. Some people care most about staying near family and friends. Others want to make sure they can do their favorite activities, attend religious services, or eat familiar foods.

 MY PRIORITIES:

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## Your Finances

One of the most important parts of planning for long-term care is figuring out how to pay for it. Now that you have a goal, it's time to examine your finances and come up with a strategy to help you reach it.

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- ✔ Find out what long-term care costs in the area where you want to live. Visit [aarp.org/longtermcarecosts](http://aarp.org/longtermcarecosts). You can even compare different areas of the country.

**Home Care Aide:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Adult Day Services:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Assisted Living:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nursing Home:** \_\_\_\_\_

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- ✔ Medicare does not cover most long-term care, but there are other government programs that can help with some living expenses. Visit [aarp.org/quickLINK](http://aarp.org/quickLINK) to learn more about public benefit programs in your state and if you're likely to be eligible. You can see what different programs do – and do not – cover on **Page 22** of the Resource Guide.

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\_\_\_\_\_

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- ✔ Make a list of your retirement income sources and other assets:

**Retirement Income:**

Social Security (latest monthly projection) \_\_\_\_\_

Pension (forecasted monthly payout) \_\_\_\_\_

401(k) (forecasted monthly projection) \_\_\_\_\_

IRA/Roth (forecasted monthly projection) \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Assets:**

Checking/Savings (current balances) \_\_\_\_\_

House (current value) \_\_\_\_\_

Stocks/Bonds/Annuities (current value) \_\_\_\_\_

Trust (current value) \_\_\_\_\_

Long-Term Care Insurance (expected benefit) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (list with values) \_\_\_\_\_

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- ✔ Talk with a trusted financial advisor about what strategy is best for meeting your goals.

 NOTES FROM CONVERSATION:

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\_\_\_\_\_

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## Your Health

Maintaining your health has a lot to do with your ability to live independently as you age. And there are also plenty of immediate benefits to living an active, healthy lifestyle. A little research now, plus a few changes, can increase your chances for a healthy future.

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- ✔ Learn what health risks run in your family and discuss them with your doctor. Create a family health history at [www.familyhistory.hhs.gov](http://www.familyhistory.hhs.gov). Print out a copy, attach it to this worksheet, and share it with loved ones.

DATE COMPLETED: \_\_\_\_\_

*What health problems should I be concerned about?*

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*What can I do to prevent problems down the road?*

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- ✔ Get recommended screenings and shots. Print a personalized screening chart to discuss with your doctor at [aarp.org/womenchecklist](http://aarp.org/womenchecklist) or [aarp.org/menchecklist](http://aarp.org/menchecklist).

DATE COMPLETED: \_\_\_\_\_

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- ✔ Stay on top of your medications. Create a personal medication record at [aarp.org/medicationrecord](http://aarp.org/medicationrecord) or call AARP at **1.888.OUR.AARP** and ask for publication D 18358. Give copies to all of your doctors and any pharmacies you use.

DATE COMPLETED: \_\_\_\_\_

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- ✔ If you're a caregiver, take care of yourself, too! Find ideas for managing stress and other resources at [aarp.org/caregivers](http://aarp.org/caregivers).

DATE COMPLETED: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Your Wishes

It's important to put in writing how you want your medical care and finances handled if you're ever unable to make your own decisions. That way, your family won't have to guess what you would want. You should also keep a record of all your vital papers and accounts, so your loved ones can find them in an emergency.

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- ✔ Tell your family how you feel about life-sustaining medical treatments – and ask whether they've thought about their own wishes.

DATE COMPLETED: \_\_\_\_\_

 NOTES FROM CONVERSATION:

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- ✔ Print out advance directives for your state from [aarp.org/caregiving](http://aarp.org/caregiving). You will need both a living will and health care power of attorney form. See **Page 29** of the Resource Guide to learn more about these documents.

DATE COMPLETED: \_\_\_\_\_

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- ✔ Prepare your living will and health care power of attorney. Give a copy to your health care agent and physician.

DATE COMPLETED: \_\_\_\_\_

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- ✔ Meet with a lawyer to prepare a financial power of attorney. See **Page 30** of the Resource Guide to learn about this document and where to find free and low-cost legal services.

DATE COMPLETED: \_\_\_\_\_

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- ✔ Complete the “Valuable Documents at Your Fingertips” worksheet at the end of the Resource Guide. Place a copy of it – along with your advance directives and financial power of attorney – in a safe, accessible place. Let family know where to find these documents in an emergency.

DATE COMPLETED: \_\_\_\_\_

# Long-Term Care Resources

## YOUR HOME AND COMMUNITY

### **American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging**

[www.aahsa.org](http://www.aahsa.org) or 1.202.783.2242

Consumer information on long-term care facilities and services, and how to access them.

### **Assisted Living Federation of America**

[www.alfa.org](http://www.alfa.org) or 1.703.894.1805

Information and resources on assisted living options and how to find a residence.

### **Eldercare Locator**

[www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov) or 1.800.677.1116

A public service that connects you with resources and services for older people in communities throughout the United States.

### **n4a**

[www.n4a.org/answers-on-aging](http://www.n4a.org/answers-on-aging)

A membership organization of local Area Agencies on Aging and Title VI programs. Provides answers to questions about home and community-based services for older adults and family caregivers.

### **National Association for Home Care & Hospice**

[www.nahc.org/consumer/home.html](http://www.nahc.org/consumer/home.html) or 1.202.547.7424

Consumer information on how to select a home care provider or hospice.

### **National Association of Home Builders**

[www.nahb.org/reference\\_list](http://www.nahb.org/reference_list) or 1.800.368.5242

Maintains a Web-based directory of Certified Aging-in-Place Specialists who can identify and/or provide home modifications that make a home accessible, safer, and more comfortable for older adults.

### **National Association of Social Workers**

[www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org) or 1.202.408.8600

Maintains a directory of licensed social workers at [www.helppro.com/nasw](http://www.helppro.com/nasw).

### **National Association of State Units on Aging**

[www.nasua.org](http://www.nasua.org)

A membership organization of the agencies in state government that manage programs for older people and adults with physical disabilities.

### **National Resource Center on Supportive Housing & Home Modification**

[www.homemods.org](http://www.homemods.org) or 1.213.740.1364

A clearinghouse of information and materials for people of all ages and abilities who want to live independently or age in place.

### **National Shared Housing Resource Center**

[www.nationalsharedhousing.org](http://www.nationalsharedhousing.org)

Maintains a directory of shared housing programs by state.

### **Rebuilding Together**

[www.rebuildingtogether.org](http://www.rebuildingtogether.org) or 1.800.473.4229

A national volunteer program that helps people of limited resources with home repair and housing improvements. It can connect you with a local program.

### **U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA)**

[www.aoa.gov](http://www.aoa.gov) or 1.202.619.0724

The federal agency responsible for advancing the concerns and interests of older people. AoA works through and with state and local offices on aging. The website has a variety of tools and information for older people and their caregivers.

### **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**

[www.hud.gov/groups/seniors.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/groups/seniors.cfm) or 1.202.708.1112

Provides information to help older adults make informed choices about housing options and financial assistance resources. To find your local public housing authority, look in the blue pages of your local telephone directory or call HUD.

## **YOUR HEALTH**

### **Alzheimer's Association**

[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) or 1.800.272.3900

Resources, tools, and a 24-hour help line for people with Alzheimer's disease and their families.

### **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services**

[www.cms.gov](http://www.cms.gov) or 1.800.633.4227 for Medicare

The federal agency that oversees Medicare and Medicaid. The Medicare website ([www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)) has helpful information for consumers on eligibility and benefits. There are tools that provide information on nursing homes, hospitals, home health agencies, health plans, and Medicare prescription drug plans in your area. The tools also rate service, facility, and plan performance.

### **Family Caregiver Alliance**

[www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org) or 1.800.445.8106

Tools and resources for family caregivers and a Family Care Navigator with information on services in your state.

### **National Alliance for Caregiving**

[www.caregiving.org](http://www.caregiving.org)

Research and policy analysis as well as support for state and local caregiving coalitions. Also gathers and reviews books, videos, websites, and other material to help family caregivers and professionals.

### **National Alliance for Hispanic Health**

[www.hispanichealth.org](http://www.hispanichealth.org) and its Su Familia: The Hispanic Family Health Helpline 1.866.783.2645

Free, reliable, and confidential health information for Hispanic families.

### **National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers**

[www.caremanager.org](http://www.caremanager.org) or 1.520.881.8008

Information and resources about geriatric care management and how to find a care manager.

## **YOUR HEALTH (continued)**

### **National Family Caregivers Association**

[www.thefamilycaregiver.org](http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org) or 1.800.896.3650

Information, educational materials, and support for family caregivers. Includes [www.familycaregiving101.org](http://www.familycaregiving101.org), a joint project with the National Alliance for Caregiving to educate and assist family caregivers.

### **National Women's Health Information Center**

[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov) or 1.800.994.9662

Tools and information from the Office of Women's Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services which promotes health, wellness, and disease prevention for women of all ages.

### **NIHSeniorHealth**

[www.nihseniorhealth.gov](http://www.nihseniorhealth.gov) or 1.800.222.2225

Fact sheets from the U.S. National Institutes of Health on a range of health topics important to older adults can be viewed online or ordered for free.

### **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Healthy Living**

[www.cdc.gov/HealthyLiving/](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyLiving/) or 1.800.232.4636

Information on a variety of health topics including staying healthy and healthy life stages.

## **YOUR FINANCES**

### **National Association of Insurance Commissioners**

[www.naic.org/index\\_consumer](http://www.naic.org/index_consumer) or 1.816.783.8500

Information to help consumers make wise decisions when purchasing insurance.

### **Financial Planning Association**

[www.fpaforfinancialplanning.org](http://www.fpaforfinancialplanning.org) or 1.800.332.4237

Financial planning information and a directory of certified financial planners.

### **The National Association of Personal Financial Advisors**

[www.napfa.org/consumer](http://www.napfa.org/consumer) or 1.847.483.5400

Consumer tips and tools and a directory of fee-only financial advisors.

### **Pension Rights Center**

[www.pensionrights.org](http://www.pensionrights.org) or 1.202.296.3776

Provides information on pensions, profit sharing, and retirement savings plans as well as how to find pension counseling assistance programs.

### **State Health Insurance Assistance Program**

[www.shiptalk.org](http://www.shiptalk.org)

One-on-one counseling assistance for people with Medicare and their families.

Go to the website or call Medicare at 1.800.633.4227 to find your state SHIP.

### **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) or 1.800.827.1000

Information about eligibility and benefits for veterans and their families.

### **U.S. Social Security Administration**

[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) or 1.800.772.1213

Information on eligibility and benefits is available from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, as well as on recorded messages 24 hours a day.

### **Women’s Institute for a Secure Retirement**

[www.wiserwomen.org](http://www.wiserwomen.org) or 1.202.393.5452

Information on preparing for a financially sound retirement including Social Security, pensions, saving, investing, and more. Specific information on widowhood and divorce.

## **YOUR WISHES**

### **Aging with Dignity**

[www.agingwithdignity.org](http://www.agingwithdignity.org) or 1.888.5WISHES (1.888.594.7437)

Information and instruction on developing a living will and having conversations with family, including the publication “Five Wishes.”

### **American Bar Association Commission on Law and Aging**

<http://new.abanet.org/aging> or 1.202.662.8690

Information on the legal rights of older adults and referrals to lawyers in your area.

### **Caring Connections**

[www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org)

A national consumer and community engagement initiative to improve care at the end of life. Provides free, state-specific advance directive forms and instructions.

### **National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys**

[www.naela.org](http://www.naela.org) or 1.703.942.5711

Consumer information and access to a database of elder law attorney members.

### **National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization**

[www.nhpco.org](http://www.nhpco.org) or 1.800.658.8898

Provides free consumer information on hospice care and puts the public in direct contact with hospice programs.

## **YOUR VOICE**

### **National Long-Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center**

[www.ltombudsman.org](http://www.ltombudsman.org) or 1.202.332.2275

Help with finding an ombudsman, a person who advocates for quality care for residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities, and helps resolve complaints.

### **NCCNHR (formerly the National Citizens’ Coalition for Nursing Home Reform)**

[www.nccnhr.org](http://www.nccnhr.org) or 1.202.332.2275

Information and leadership on policies to improve the lives of people in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

### **OWL**

[www.owl-national.org](http://www.owl-national.org) 1.800.825.3695

OWL educates the public nationally and through local chapters about issues affecting midlife and older women.

# Valuable Documents at Your Fingertips

## USEFUL INFORMATION

<b>Name</b>	_____
<b>Date Completed</b>	_____
<b>Primary Doctor</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Other Doctor</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Dentist</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Pharmacy</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Lawyer</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Accountant</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Power of Attorney</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Healthcare Agent</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Investment Broker</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Faith Leader</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Name of Bank</b>	_____
<i>Acct #</i>	_____
<b>Name of Bank</b>	_____
<i>Acct #</i>	_____
<b>Emergency Contact</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____
<b>Emergency Contact</b>	_____
<i>Phone</i>	_____



**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

*Where Is It Kept?*

**Social Security #**

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**Birth Certificate**

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**Marriage Certificate**

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**Divorce Papers**

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**Military Records:**

*Military ID #*

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*Dates of Service*

---

*Branch of Service*

---

**Organ Donor Card**

---

**Passport/**

**Citizenship Papers**

---

**Will**

---

**Trusts**

---

**Safety Deposit Box:**

*Where are keys kept?*

---

*Number*

---

**INSURANCE INFORMATION**

*Where Is It Kept?*

**Automobile**

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**Disability**

---

**Homeowners**

---

**Life**

---

**Long-Term Care**

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**Health**

---

*Other*

---

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

*Where Is It Kept?*

**Automobile Title/  
Registration**

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**Automobile Title/  
Registration**

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---

**Bank Statements**

---

---

**Bonds**

---

**CDs**

---

**Bank Account:**

*Checking*

---

*Savings*

---

*Money Market*

---

**401K Account**

---

**IRAs**

---

---

**Mortgage Information**

---

**Outstanding Loans**

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---

**Property Deeds/Title**

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---

**Stock Certificates**

---

---

**Income Tax Records**

---

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**Pension Records**

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**Utility Bills**

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**MEDICAL INFORMATION**

*Where Is It Kept?*

Advance Directives

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Do Not Resuscitate  
Papers

---

Healthcare Power  
of Attorney

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Living Will

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**FINAL WISHES**

*Where Is It Kept?*

Letter of Instruction

---

Burial Arrangements

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Cemetery Information

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Funeral Home

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For more information about planning for long-term care, visit [www.aarp.org/decide](http://www.aarp.org/decide). Decide to plan now for long-term care, create a plan that works for you, and share it with your loved ones. Let AARP help you **Decide. Create. Share.<sup>SM</sup>**

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