

A photograph of an elderly woman with short, light-colored hair, wearing a dark brown hat with a feather and a grey and white patterned cardigan. She is smiling broadly and holding a glass of white wine. In the background, other people are seated at tables in a dining room setting. A blue rectangular box is overlaid on the bottom left of the image, containing the title text.

The Complete Guide to Assisted Living

COMPLIMENTS OF



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INTRODUCTION

Are you worried about your aging parent? Perhaps your loved one fell at home a few months ago, or perhaps you have noticed that they are not taking their medication as prescribed. These are common concerns that can keep you up at night as you struggle to find the right way to keep your loved one healthy and happy.

However, it can be difficult to start the process of searching for assistance. The senior care industry is large, and anyone can feel lost or overwhelmed in the fray. Fortunately, we have compiled everything you need to know about a common and very helpful senior living level of care that could benefit your aging loved one: assisted living.





ASSISTED LIVING DEFINED

Senior living communities are often categorized by level of care. Assisted living is one such level of care. According to the [Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#), assisted living communities have several key components: 24-hour service and oversight, services that meet the scheduled and unscheduled needs of residents, and care that promotes independence. Assisted living communities also feature a home-like environment, opportunities for choice, and privacy.

In short, assisted living communities offer residents a safe place to call home, with caregivers readily available 24 hours per day to support the independence of residents.

“Senior living communities are often categorized by level of care.”



HOW ASSISTED LIVING DIFFERS FROM OTHER TYPES OF CARE

When searching for a senior community for your loved one, you will notice immediately that assisted living is not the only type of senior care available. Independent living, memory care, and skilled nursing care round out the “big four” categories for senior living throughout the country. It is important to note how assisted living differs from these other levels of care, as it will help you decide whether assisted living is the best option for your loved one.



Assisted living vs. independent living

Independent living and assisted living are similar in many ways, including apartment privacy and some amenities. However, assisted living differs greatly when it comes to access to services. Assisted living has caregiving staff readily available and working at the community 24 hours per day. This is especially helpful for residents who may need assistance in the middle of the night or who want the extra assurance of safety checks around the clock.

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Assisted living vs. memory care

Memory care communities offer 24-hour care, similar to assisted living. However, assisted living is less focused on providing specialized care to seniors with Alzheimer's disease or other types of dementia. Instead, assisted living focuses on maintaining the independence of residents while giving the helpful hand that is sometimes needed for more general daily tasks or health maintenance.



Assisted living vs. skilled nursing

The most clinical and hospital-like of all the senior care community options, skilled nursing communities feature an ideal environment for seniors who are living with complex medical conditions that need significant care. Assisted living differs in that residents still live in lovely, home-like apartments, and residents are still ambulatory without much assistance.





WHAT YOU WILL GET IN ASSISTED LIVING

While each assisted living community is unique and features a culture that suits the residents who live there, you can expect certain features when touring any premier assisted living community.

First, you can count on a safe and home-like environment. Residents typically have a choice of a few apartment layouts, each with important features like bathrooms equipped with grab bars and kitchenettes for independent meals or snacks. Some communities have apartments with patios or balconies, and residents are encouraged to bring in their own furniture and decorations. Housekeeping, maintenance, and transportation services are available to residents as well, which allows them to simply enjoy retirement and skip out on chores that have become a hassle.

*“Some communities have apartments
with patios or balconies.”*



Next, assisted living communities feature quality care. Beyond a familiar face available 24 hours per day, there are also nursing staff available to offer assistance with medication management, blood sugar testing, and even communication with your loved one's doctor. Most assisted living communities also bring medical professionals on-site to offer care, such as podiatry, audiology, and even physical, occupational, or speech therapy. It is wonderful to have access to these ancillary services right down the hall.

Assisted living communities offer exceptional dining opportunities. Meals are served to residents three times per day in a community dining room, which makes these moments more familial and social. Chefs offer entrée choices to residents and are equipped to meet the complex needs of medically prescribed specialized diets.

Finally, assisted living communities are social hubs meant to keep even the most introverted residents engaged with peers. Each assisted living community has a fully staffed department that plans, executes, and evaluates activities, trips, and events. This emphasis on building friendships, pursuing hobbies, and lifelong learning keeps residents feeling connected with their neighbors.

“It is wonderful to have access to these ancillary services right down the hall.”





THE COST OF ASSISTED LIVING

As you begin to explore assisted living communities in your desired location, you may be initially shocked at the cost. However, most assisted living communities actually offer a less expensive way to live well in retirement.

Most assisted living communities charge a monthly rent that includes not only room and board, but also meals, most activities, housekeeping services, transportation, and utilities. Some even include WiFi access and cable in this monthly payment. If you take time to break down your loved one's current bills, you will notice that the cost of assisted living is a bargain by comparison.

If your loved one requires advanced care, you may be charged an additional monthly fee. This cost is to ensure that your loved one has the staff available to her and that there are adequate supplies. However, beyond this additional fee for residents with extra care needs, the other ancillary costs are minimal and may include trip costs or optional purchases at the grocery store.

“As you begin to explore assisted living communities in your desired location, you may be initially shocked at the cost.”



WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM ASSISTED LIVING?

How can you be sure that assisted living is the best level of care for your aging loved one? Many seniors can benefit from services provided in premier assisted living communities. Here are a few examples of seniors who may thrive in an assisted living apartment.



The lonely social butterfly

A senior who was once active in the community and had a bustling social calendar but now lives at home alone would love assisted living. With a calendar full of activities that are located just steps away from the apartment, this senior can meet new friends and keep up with their favorite hobbies (or learn a new one). This senior would likely see a decrease in feelings of loneliness or depression and an increase in feelings of connection.



“Many seniors can benefit from services provided in premier assisted living communities.”



The independent warrior

A senior who loves living at home because of the independence but who is not able to keep up with daily tasks would thrive in assisted living. Without needing to worry about chores like vacuuming or preparing meals three times per day, this senior would have ample time to pursue independent activities that they love. This senior is also likely to feel better, as extra chores and medical management can take additional energy.



The fall risk

A senior living at home who has a history of falling would benefit from care in assisted living. Most assisted living communities have emergency call systems, allowing the senior to get help immediately, and offer complex fall risk assessments to prevent a fall in the first place. Further, this senior could see an increase in balance and strength with additional mobility and group exercise programs available down the hall.



The worrier

A senior who feels unsafe or anxious at home would blossom in their assisted living apartment. Knowing that there are caring staff available to provide assistance or a reassuring touch can do wonders for reducing anxiety. Seniors with family members who are worried about them living at home also succeed in assisted living. Communities communicate well with family members and keep loved ones in the loop about the health and life of the resident.





The couple

Assisted living communities are not just for single seniors. In fact, couples that share an apartment in assisted living communities are able to socialize with new neighbors and eliminate the stress involved with household tasks. Couples can also rest easy knowing there are places throughout the community that they can use to entertain family members, and most assisted living communities offer family events that encourage connection.



The persistently pained senior

A senior with chronic pain or a chronic condition requiring medical management, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, would benefit from assisted living. Nursing staff experienced with senior issues drive care of residents and communicate heavily with doctors. This senior is able to receive up-to-the-minute medication changes and can have their vitals assessed at any time.

“Nursing staff experienced with senior issues drive care of residents and communicate heavily with doctors.”



FINDING YOUR IDEAL ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY

Once you have decided that assisted living is the ideal fit for your loved one, it is time to investigate options available in your desired location. Take multiple tours of each assisted living facility, taking time to watch how staff members interact with residents and how residents appear (are they healthy and happy?). It is also wise to bring your loved one along for a tour and stick around for a meal in the dining room or to participate in an activity.

During your time at each community, look for evidence of quality care, such as healthy and smiling residents. Ask for an activity calendar and confirm that there are multiple activities and events offered daily, as well as weekly chances to get out of the building and explore the greater community. Finally, look at the weekly menu and ask if chefs can meet your loved one's specific preferences or medical dietary needs.



A few questions to ask while on tour or while chatting with staff could be:

- ♦ How many staff are available overnight?
- ♦ Does your community work with my loved one's preferred doctor?
- ♦ Are there transportation services offered if I cannot escort my loved one to an appointment?
- ♦ What is included in the monthly fee?
- ♦ Will I need to pay more for extended care or for care associated with my loved one's specific medical needs?
- ♦ Are there clubs or groups that my loved one may enjoy?
- ♦ How often are families invited into the community?
- ♦ Are there visiting hours?
- ♦ Are there laundry services available?

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HOW TO MAKE THE TRANSITION TO ASSISTED LIVING

Once you choose a community, your loved one will be assessed by a staff member. This assessment is to ensure the community knows the medical history and needs of your loved one and that everyone is on the same page regarding expectations and costs. During your assessment time, the nursing staff will work with you to get medications and medical records transferred over to the community so there is no gap in care during the move.

After the assessment, you will be assigned a move-in date. The time before the move is bound to be stressful as you and your loved one work to pack up items to move, to donate, and to sell. Use this time to remind yourself and your loved one about the positive aspects of the new assisted living community. This is also a great time to schedule another meal at the community so that your loved one can meet a few new friends.

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Finally, during move-in day, expect a hustle and bustle of activity. You and your loved one will have assistance with moving in furniture and boxes, and staff will pop in to introduce themselves. No doubt you will also meet a few curious neighbors who pass by to welcome your loved one to their new home. Be sure to pick up the latest community newsletter and activity calendar so you can choose a few interesting events for your loved one to attend in the first week at their new home.

Sooner than you think, your loved one will feel at home in their new assisted living apartment. You will love hearing about delicious meals, new friends, and fun events. Most importantly, you will love knowing that your loved one is safe, healthy, and well cared for in their new assisted living home.





We would love to meet you and give you a tour so you can see our home for yourself. Let's keep your loved one healthy and happy during their retirement years.



3715 Northside Parkway, Building 300,
Suite 110, Atlanta, GA 30327
www.arborcompany.com