



THE ARBOR
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Comparing Alzheimer's and Dementia Care Options

COMPLIMENTS OF



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A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA CARE

Finding yourself face to face with a diagnosis of dementia for your loved one is scary. You are likely nervous, a little bit confused, sad and overwhelmed. Even though diagnosis brings about a litany of emotions and “what ifs,” you also have the chance to now arm yourself with information that will allow you to better understand the disease, connect better with your loved one, and be the best advocate you can be. Consider this brief e-book your first step in getting the information you need in order to make the best care decisions possible.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. While Alzheimer's disease is the type of dementia thought of the most, there are other types of dementia as well.

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In any case, significant memory loss is not a normal part of aging. If you have already received a diagnosis of dementia for your loved one, you are not alone. The Alzheimer's Association notes that one in three seniors die of Alzheimer's or another dementia, with more than five million Americans already living with Alzheimer's disease.

Dementia—Alzheimer's or otherwise—is progressive and will continue to affect your loved one throughout the rest of his or her life. Memory loss, judgment issues, confusion and behaviors such as wandering can make independent living nearly impossible as the disease progresses. However, there is an entire senior living industry ready to support your loved one and your entire family. Senior-care solutions include specialized dementia care that focuses on failure-free activities that keep seniors engaged, calm and feeling safe in their environment of choice.





HOW SPECIALIZED DEMENTIA CARE ENHANCES QUALITY OF LIFE

While many family members initially shy away from senior care options for their loved ones, those with dementia often benefit from intentional dementia care. Seniors living with a form of dementia can benefit from the socialization, engagement in their community and specialized environments geared to keeping residents safe.

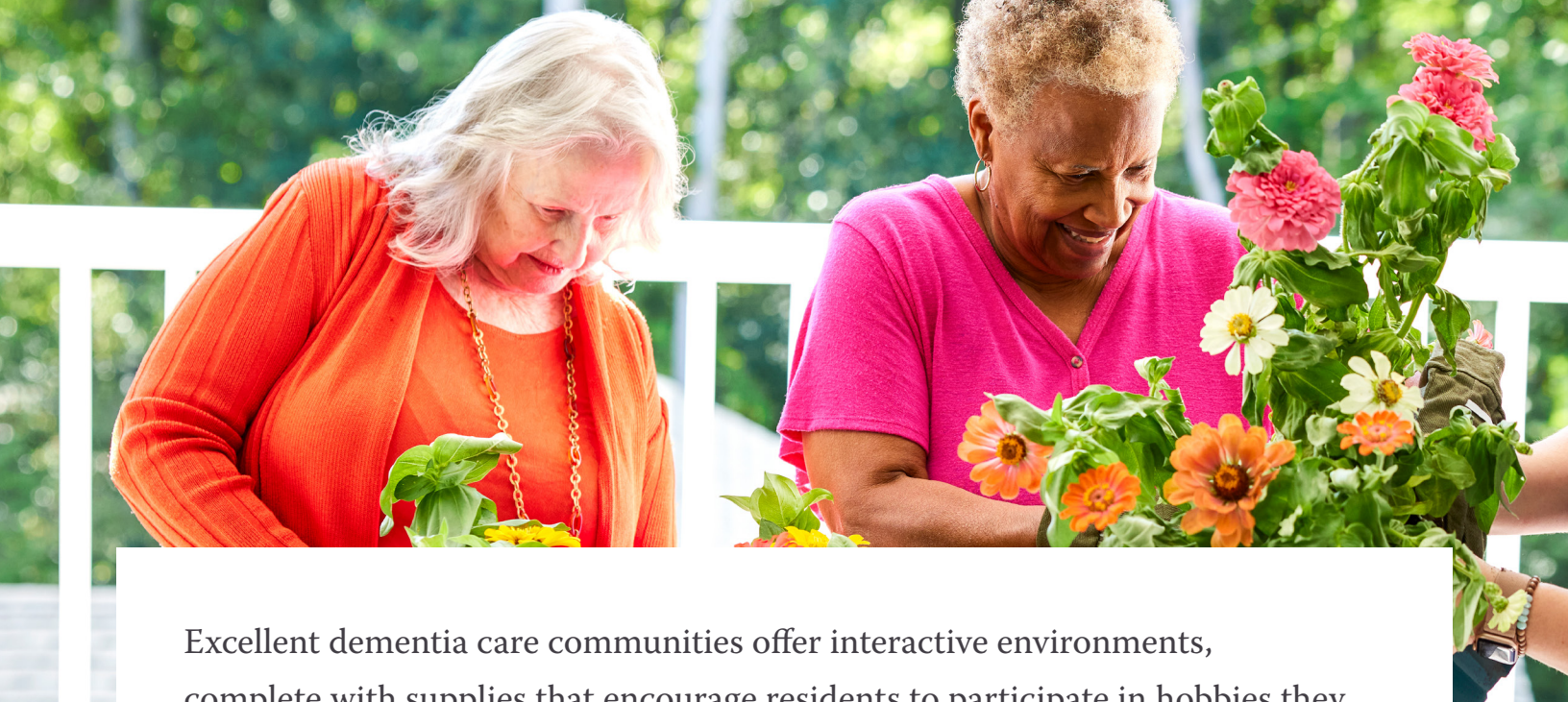
Top dementia care programs often feature a robust activity calendar, full of small- and large-group opportunities for residents to enjoy. These activities aren't just for marketing the community as active. This activity schedule has been specially crafted by dementia care professionals in order to keep residents socially interacting with one another. According to current research, [AARP](#) reports that there is a direct link between healthy socialization and positive mental health. In fact, socialization with peers can also keep dementia at bay or even reduce the symptoms.

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Healthy socialization is fostered and nurtured within small-group activities. While you may love that your mom is getting out and attending an ice cream social, your mom's brain is working overtime over scoops of ice cream and conversation. While researchers aren't quite sure why socialization does so much for the aging brain, the results—both anecdotal and scientific—show that being with friends and peers who offer encouragement, support, and love helps the brain. In most cases, residents in dementia care communities are now given the chance to interact with staff and peers multiple times throughout the day. Before moving in, those same seniors were probably isolated at home with few opportunities to chat and interact with others. Simply by moving into a dementia care community, new residents are already given a chance to improve their lives.

But dementia care communities don't just offer the chance to have healthy socialization. Communities feature calendars, interactions and environments that are made to get residents interacting with their new home. Feeling purposeful and important is a wonderful self-esteem-builder and gives residents confidence and calmness.





Excellent dementia care communities offer interactive environments, complete with supplies that encourage residents to participate in hobbies they once enjoyed or in chores they find gratifying. Walking into an interactive community for the first time, you may wonder why you spot a resident dusting the living room or another resident folding towels on the couch. Don't worry—these residents aren't doing jobs for a staff member. Instead, these residents are participating in failure-free activities that keep their minds engaged and give them a sense of purpose and belonging. These busy residents are less likely to be confused, wander or exhibit other behaviors that are sometimes associated with dementia.

Finally, dementia care communities offer specialized environments designed to keep residents safe. These communities uphold dignity and increase independence for residents who live there, while making sure that residents are secure. Further, these communities are built to offer residents choice while managing risk. For example, dementia care communities often offer a garden or outdoor area that is accessible through an unlocked door. Residents can choose to go outside in order to participate in an activity or to take a stroll on the paths. However, these outdoor areas are often secure with a beautiful fence and are within eyesight of the nursing station. Residents who are given the option to make their own choices without staff interference are more likely to remain calm and engaged as well.



THE DIFFERENT OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR ALZHEIMER'S AND DEMENTIA CARE

If you are searching for dementia care options for your loved one, you are fortunate to have an industry that offers multiple solutions for your specific situation. Even better, these options are available for you to use throughout your family's journey with dementia. Before you can choose which communities or options to explore, it is helpful to know a bit about each option, as well as the pros and cons and when those options may be the best.

Home Health

Most children want to keep their parent at home for as long as possible, even if that parent has a diagnosis of dementia. It can become unsafe or unhealthy for your loved one to live alone when he or she has dementia. This is when home health assistance can be beneficial to your family. Home health, or home-care assistance, is offered through agencies that schedule caregivers to come into your loved one's home (or your home) in order to provide assistance with everything from daily care to housekeeping to grocery shopping to errands. Typically, payment is by the hour or other designated time period and is paid out of pocket.

Home health has many benefits, but perhaps the best is that your loved one can stay at home for longer.

Home health has many benefits, but perhaps the best is that your loved one can stay at home for longer. Familiar surroundings can offer a sense of peace and security for your loved one, and home care offers that. Home care also offers a good solution to the decreased socialization from living alone. Caregivers can become friends, chatting about everything from current events to past experiences with your loved one. Unfortunately, home-care agencies can be understaffed and not be able to guarantee that the same caregiver will consistently serve your loved one. This lack of continuity can be unnerving and confusing for your loved one, who is being asked to let a stranger into his or her home on a daily basis. Most home-care agencies do not require additional dementia care training, and caregivers may not have successful interactions because of it.



Adult Day Care

Adult day care centers are another option for seniors who are not safe to be at home alone during the day while their loved one is at work or for someone living with dementia who can benefit from scheduled programming during the daytime hours. These centers are typically open for approved participants five days per week, during normal business hours. Participants are given lunch and snacks, along with scheduled activity programs and opportunities for rest.

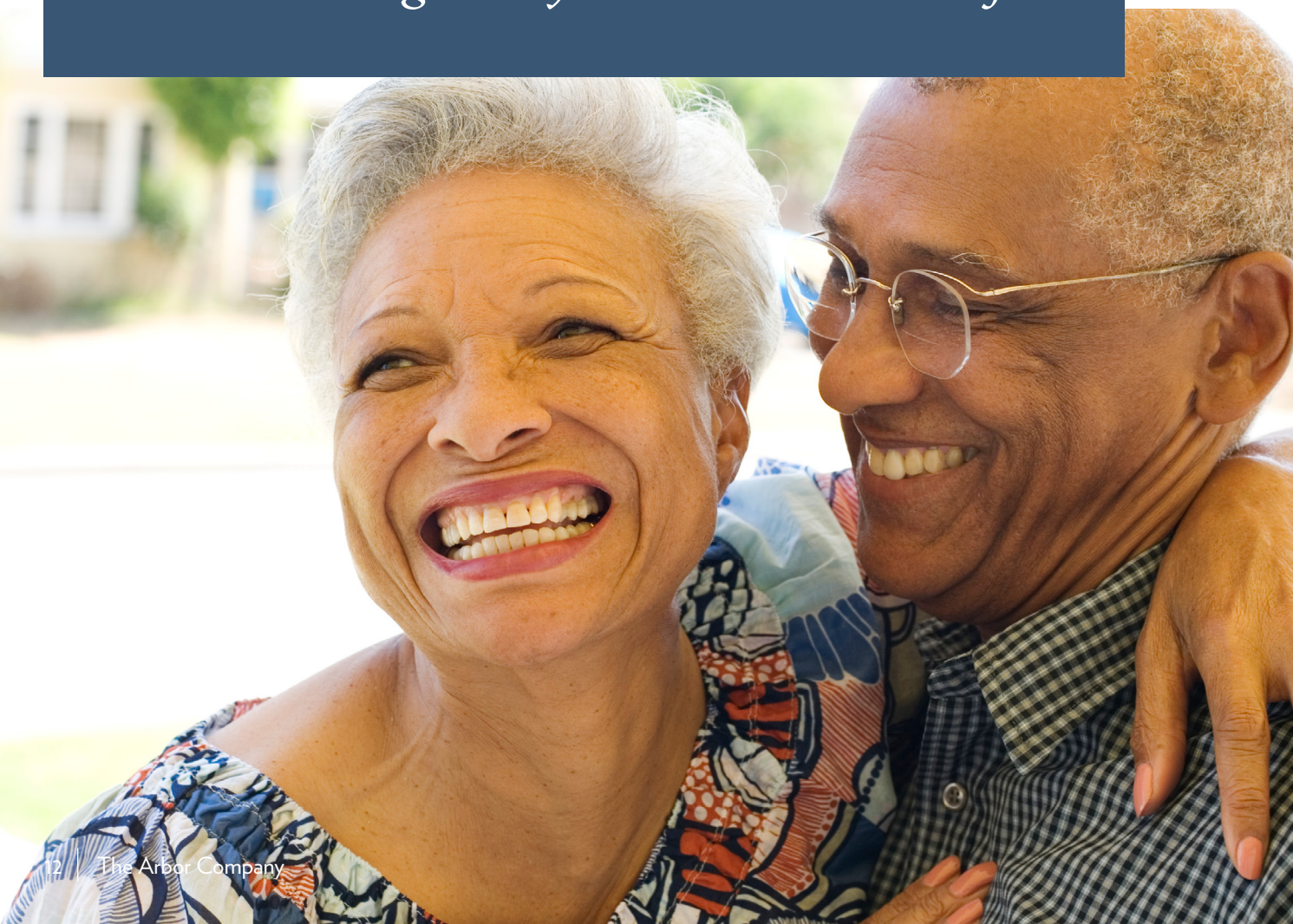
Assisted Living

Assisted living communities are the first option to consider when looking for dementia care. Assisted living communities can be either freestanding or a part of a larger campus that offers multiple levels of care. In most situations, assisted living communities require residents to pay a monthly rent that varies based on the amount of care assistance they need.

Residents with early-stage dementia can often succeed in an assisted living environment. The socialization and quick access to assistance and medical intervention (24-hour-a-day nursing staff, medication assistance, etc.) is excellent for the resident and can put you at ease knowing that your loved one is safe. Unfortunately, most assisted living communities do not have the staff to appropriately engage and redirect residents who are further along in the dementia process. The staff members who are in the assisted living community are typically not trained in dementia-specific techniques and interactions. Residents who are confused, who wander, who are aggressive or who need a significant amount of prompting and cueing for daily tasks are often encouraged to move out and into a more comprehensive level of care. Further, assisted living communities do not offer a more secure community, leaving confused residents at risk for eloping (leaving the community unattended).

Assisted living communities can work well for a senior who is exhibiting some mild cognitive impairment issues, who is in the early stages of the disease or who is a spouse living with someone without dementia. However, as the disease progresses, the senior will need to be relocated for his or her safety and engagement. It is often best to not consider assisted living, as the move to another community a year or two down the road can prove to be traumatic and confusing to your loved one.

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Nursing Homes

Nursing homes, or skilled-nursing facilities, are another option for dementia care. In these communities, long-term-care residents pay a monthly rent either out of pocket or through Medicaid. Nurses and caregivers, along with other staff members like social workers or dining staff, work together in order to ensure that residents are healthy and thriving in a long-term-care environment. Residents do not always have a dementia diagnosis in a skilled-nursing facility.

Nursing homes are often an option for someone who has limited funds and is approved for Medicaid spending. However, some nursing homes can have a waiting list that is years long for these coveted long-term-care beds. Nursing homes offer the most extensive medical care, which can be a benefit for seniors with end-stage dementia or who have dementia plus another chronic condition that requires monitoring or management. While nursing homes can be a great option for some living with dementia, it can also feel a bit too medical or sterile, especially for someone in the early or middle stages of the disease. While activity programs are offered in skilled-nursing communities, most are not geared specifically for those living with dementia, and the sometimes loud environment can be overstimulating and agitating for those with the disease.

Memory Care

Assisted living communities with a specialized memory care unit or building is another option to consider while searching for the best dementia care plan for your loved one. These cozy units operate under an assisted living license, but have extra regulations and requirements due to the population served. Monthly rent is paid out of pocket, typically, and covers everything, including meals and programming.

Memory care neighborhoods within assisted living communities are a true haven for those with dementia. The communities are designed to feel cozy, homelike and reassuring. Often, the units are easy to navigate and offer an enclosed outdoor area or two. Doors leading into and out of the unit are often secured in order to ensure that residents do not wander out of the community unassisted. Family members and friends are typically encouraged to visit throughout the day and even to participate in activities with their loved one. Staff members, such as nurses and caregivers, are required to take training classes on dementia care and successful interventions. Activities are planned by a qualified professional with the perfect amount of stimulation to engage residents without adding extra stress into their days. Nutrition is also planned in order to meet medical guidelines and doctor recommendations and is served to increase independence and encourage intake.

Memory care is ideal for seniors in any stage of the disease process. These communities also are great for family members, as most offer support groups and educational lectures that provide resources to family members like you who are learning about the disease.

How to Decide Which Option Is Best

Now that you have an idea about the four most common options for dementia care—home care, adult day care, assisted living, nursing homes and memory care—you can begin to choose which option may work for your current situation. Here are a few things to consider as you narrow your general options:

- ✓ Home care might work best for your loved one if he or she is in the earlier stages of dementia and if he or she needs light assistance or cueing for hygiene, cooking or other daily tasks.
- ✓ Adult day care would be ideal for a senior who is in the early to middle stages of the disease and who is able to be healthy at home with a full-time caregiver (or loved one) in the evenings, but who needs extended supervision during the day.
- ✓ Skilled nursing homes works best for a senior with dementia who is in the middle to later stages of the disease or a senior who also has a complicated medical issue that needs regular medical intervention, monitoring and assistance.
- ✓ Assisted living is a good option for a senior who is in the early stages of the disease, who is not exhibiting wandering behaviors and who already is living in a senior community.
- ✓ Assisted living services would be more of a bridge to more extended care in a few years.
- ✓ Typically an extension of assisted living, dementia care or memory care is the best option for a senior in any stage of the dementia process who may exhibit wandering or other complicated behaviors or needs.

Dementia care may be the best option if you answer “yes” to more than two of the following questions:

- Is your loved one exhibiting any concerning safety behaviors such as wandering or becoming lost?
- Is your loved one aggressive or easily agitated?
- Does your loved one have issues trusting new people?
- Does your loved one lock out home-care employees from his or her home or refuse to go to daycare services?
- Are you currently living with your loved one as the main caregiver, but are becoming ill, exhausted, frustrated, or stressed out?
- Does your loved one try to leave his or her home unattended?
- Does your loved one show poor judgment or safety awareness when at home (leaving the oven on, going outside on a summer day in a winter coat, etc.)?
- Does your loved one appear depressed or anxious?
- Is your loved one unable to manage his or her own medical needs or emergency situations if you, or an in-home caregiver, are not readily available?

Keep in mind that a dementia program does not need to be located in a dementia-only unit or memory care-only community. In fact, a well staffed and planned dementia program can run successfully in a skilled nursing community, assisted living community or even day care. The key for dementia programming is a dedication to dementia-friendly approaches, activities and dining opportunities. As you answer these questions, take another look at the brief descriptions of types of care that we have provided, while remembering to keep your projected, planned moves to a minimum.



THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN A SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY SPECIFIC TO DEMENTIA CARE

If you are considering a senior living community as one of your viable memory care options, it is imperative that you look not only at the community itself, but also at its philosophy and dementia care program. Remember—your loved one will need dementia-specific care that is person-centered, positive and failure-free, as well as supportive. Here are a few things to look at as you tour prospective homes for your loved one:

What activities do they have specifically for memory care residents?

An engaging and diverse activity calendar for those with Alzheimer's or dementia is a must. Not only does an active daily calendar of events keep residents socializing and interacting with one another, but it also makes the day more interesting. Watch for activities that are scheduled throughout the day, including the evenings and weekends. Also, look for activities that are suited to the interests or past hobbies of your loved one specifically. If you can't find anything that you think he or she would love, talk to the activity director to see how he or she assesses new residents and adds their interests to the monthly or weekly agenda.

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While you are speaking with the activity director, ask if family members are encouraged to attend activities or even assist with trips into the greater community. It is wonderful to attend an activity with your loved one while you are visiting, and it can give you both a feeling of a good visit if you have the chance to participate in something together. Find out if the community has a resident council or a family council and if there are support groups or educational lectures offered for family and friends.

What training does the staff have to handle residents with dementia?

Dementia care becomes excellent when there is ongoing training on best practices, approaches, interventions, and the science behind the disease. All dementia care staff members are required to attend certain trainings upon hire and then throughout their tenure at the company. These requirements are dictated by federal and state regulatory agencies and can vary from state to state. You want to determine what topics are covered that go beyond the requirements.

What technology does the community have to enhance care?

Many leading dementia care communities are embracing new technologies designed to support safety, engagement, and quality of life. Look for communities that use emerging tools such as interactive sensory systems, personalized music and memory programs, and secure but non-restrictive location monitoring to help residents maintain independence while staying safe. Some communities also integrate smart lighting, adaptive communication tools, or virtual reality experiences to stimulate memory, encourage social interaction, and reduce anxiety. While technology should never replace compassionate human care, it can be a powerful aid, creating more meaningful outcomes for residents and their families.



Ask:

- What training is required for staff to attend, outside of regulatory requirements?
- Which staff members are required to take the training? (Ideally, any staff member who is working with or around memory care residents should be trained in interacting with seniors with dementia—nurses to caregivers to servers to housekeepers.)
- Do you have a commitment to ongoing training outside of the unit for staff members, including participation in Alzheimer’s Association National or Local Conferences? (These networking and educational sessions keep staff on the cutting edge of technology and disease interventions.)
- What educational opportunities are available for family members? (Top dementia care units offer empathy courses for family members that give participants the chance to interact with activities that simulate what it is like having dementia or other memory issues.)
- Do you educate staff members of the different needs of seniors in the different stages of memory loss? (Dementia care staff should understand the way the disease progresses and how that progression can change the abilities and preferences of residents.)

What approach do they take to dementia care?

A general dementia care philosophy is important for any memory care program, and it is important for you to ask what that approach looks like for each community you tour. The best approach for dementia care is a philosophy that puts the person's interests and abilities first, as well as a philosophy that offers different approaches for residents based on where the resident is in the memory loss process. For example, dementia programs that know that working with a resident in the early stages of memory loss is much different than working with someone who is in the later stages of dementia. Keep an eye out for:

- ✓ Communities that are person-centered, which means that they use the resident and family in order to guide the care plan.
- ✓ Putting a resident's preferences and past experiences first, ahead of the needs of the caregiving schedule, is beneficial and shows a commitment to resident care.
- ✓ A commitment to providing positive reactions—no matter how big or small—with residents. These interactions make residents feel safe, supported, cared for, and happy when complete, and they build self-esteem while decreasing anxiety or nervous behaviors.
- ✓ Designated plans that appreciate the varying levels of memory care progression. These residents are not necessarily divided by degree of memory loss, but staff understand the different ways of having a positive interaction based on the abilities of residents in varying stages of the disease.

- ✓ An approach that includes family and friend involvement. Families and friends should be invited and welcomed to be a part of daily life in the unit, and their input should be sought out when it comes to care-plan approaches.
- ✓ Ensure that the community sees the family as a part of the care team.
- ✓ Signs of dignity and independence. Dementia care communities should offer multiple opportunities throughout the day for residents to make their own choices and to continue to do things for themselves as long as they can.

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How are nutritional needs met in the dining room?

When it comes to nutrition, dementia can cause a multitude of problems. People living with dementia can sometimes forget to eat. Sometimes even a quiet dining room can be too overstimulating for someone with dementia, causing stress or anxious behaviors. Some seniors with dementia eat too much or not enough or attempt to eat food that doesn't fit within their doctor-recommended meal plan. It is important to touch base with communities you are researching in order to discover their approach to dining and nutrition. Listen for:

- ✓ A commitment to resident choice when it comes to entree or other options, as well as to hear that the dining staff will work with specialized diets or preferences (within reason). High-quality dementia care programs offer appetizing alternatives to specialized diets and serve food in a way that encourages independence and appetite.



What are the environmental and safety precautions?

Safety is important when it comes to senior care, but especially vital when it comes to those living with dementia. Discover what the community offers in regard to safety. The dementia care program you choose should be well-equipped with environmental safety features such as automatically locking doors, numerical entrance codes for visitors, exits within eyesight of staff, wearable alarm technology for residents, or other precautions. Ask:

- How do you decrease wandering?
- How do you prevent elopement (leaving the community without approval)?
- Are there locked doors, staff involvement, or other wearable technology that alerts when a resident is wandering near a door or exit?

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A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF DEMENTIA CARE COSTS

While we touched on some financial aspects in our section outlining different types of dementia care, it is important to also review some possible costs that your loved one may incur. Keep in mind that each community is different, as is each situation and each need. Double-check with your community of choice to review the financial specifics before you sign a contract to be sure that both parties are as informed as possible.

Room and Board

Typically included in the monthly rent, room and board charges include the apartment space and utilities. Sometimes cable and Wi-Fi are covered in the rent, but be sure to check if that is important to your loved one. As your loved one continues with the disease, a remote control or tablet can become confusing; you may determine you no longer need this amenity at that time. Room and board charges also typically include three meals per day and snacks, as well as weekly (or daily) housekeeping services. Laundry services are sometimes provided at an additional cost, or you can choose to take care of that on your own.

Assistance with Activities of Daily Living

These extra charges are usually applied when your loved one begins to need more assistance with bathing, dressing, eating, or toileting. Most communities have a rubric of sorts that outlines when assistance becomes more than average and thus incurs a fee.



Medical Supplies, Including Incontinence Needs

For most communities, medical supplies and incontinence supplies (like adult briefs) are not included in the monthly rent. These supplies are billed at an additional rate, and some supplies can be billed toward Medicare or secondary insurance reimbursement.

Participation in Community Activities

Sometimes community activities can incur an additional charge. Examples could be a theater ticket, snacks on a fishing trip, or lunch out at a favorite diner. These charges are typically billed through the activities department and are minimal.

Physical, Occupational, or Speech Therapy

At times, your loved one's doctor or the care-plan team may recommend therapy services. These services are usually covered by Medicare or a secondary insurance payer.

Choosing the right care for Alzheimer's or dementia is a deeply personal decision. The information in this guide can help you understand the differences in care options, the ways specialized dementia programs can support well-being, and the factors that matter most when evaluating communities.

Remember, you don't have to make this journey alone. Support, expertise, and compassionate care are available every step of the way. As you consider your next steps, use this information as a foundation to guide conversations with professionals and community teams who can help you navigate the path ahead.





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