

Making a Decision for Type of Care: At-Home or a Move Elsewhere

There are many instances when home care is a perfectly appropriate care choice rather than nursing home placement or a permanent move to a retirement or assisted living facility. Whether a little amount of home care is needed to help avoid a future crisis, or sporadic home care is required following an acute illness or a fall, home care can enable one to reside and recuperate in comfortable, familiar surroundings.

How does one determine if home care is the appropriate care choice for a particular person? The information below can help in the decision-making process.

Look at Activities of Daily Living Needs When Referring for Care

“Activities of Daily Living” (ADLs) are simply activities in which people engage on a day-to-day basis. These activities are fundamental to caring for oneself and maintaining independence.

- Activities of Daily Living are everyday **personal care** activities such as bathing (sponge, bath or shower), getting dressed, getting in or out of bed or a chair (also called transferring), using the toilet, eating and getting around or walking.
- **Instrumental** Activities of Daily Living are activities related to **independent living** and include preparing meals, managing money (writing checks, paying bills), shopping for groceries or personal items, maintaining a residence/ performing housework (e.g. laundry, cleaning), taking medications, using a telephone, handling mail and traveling via car or public transportation.

Why is it important to be aware of a person’s limitations with **“Activities of Daily Living”** when choosing care?

- Recognizing a person’s limitations is the first step in developing a care plan (or making a referral for care) to provide the appropriate type and level of assistance.
- Determining the type of ADL care that is needed enables a clear idea of whether or not staying at home with care is an option.
- Admission policies for Adult Day Services, care communities and institutions often reflect on ADLs to determine eligibility for care and placement for a certain type of care.
- Long-term care insurance policies/programs often rely on ADL measures (the inability to perform a certain number of ADLs) to determine whether or not an individual qualifies for benefits.



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Decision Tree to Assist when Making a Choice for Care Needs

Follow the subject titles on the left column and circle appropriate responses for each. If more responses fall under either Home Care or Possibly Move to a Facility, strongly consider that category for the care choice. Note that the column designated "Full-Time Care" can also be accomplished at home, but the cost is usually greater at home. However, many people prefer to remain at home with full-time care and are willing to absorb the extra cost. Also, be sure to consider culture, support systems and financial ability when making a referral.

| | Home Care | | | Possibly Move to a Facility | |
|--|--|---|--|--|---|
| | Independent | Minor Care | More Care | Full Time Care | Total Care |
| Emergency Response | Independent. Able to negotiate stairs and call for assistance. | Able to respond appropriately. | Probably needs assistance. | Needs major assistance. | Needs total supervision and assistance. |
| Mobility | Walks and transfers independently. | Walks and transfers independently. If falls, infrequent. | Transfer: stand-by assist may be needed. Falls frequent. | Transfer: needs assistance, one-person transfer. | Transfer: mechanical lift/ two-person transfer/bedfast. |
| Activities of Daily Living <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bathe and dress • Toilet use • Grooming • Take medications • Feed self • Communicate | Able to accomplish all without assistance. May need assistance in meals and/or housekeeping. | Needs some assistance and reminders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bathe and dress • Toilet use • Grooming • Take medications Independent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feed self • Communicate | Needs reminders and assistance. | May need heavy assistance for all. | Total assistance in all areas. |
| Socialization and Recreational Activities | Completely able to socialize and enjoys recreation. | Would benefit from socialization and activities. May need minor encouragement. | Needs reminders/ encouragement to participate in activities. | Needs escort to participate in social activities, maintain self at home. | Encouragement/ escort to activities or one-on-one activities or visits. |
| Mental Status | Oriented to place, time and self. No memory impairment. | Oriented to place, time and self. Slight or no memory impairment. | Mild memory impairment. Sometimes disoriented. | Impaired memory. Poor orientation. Mild confusion. | Needs 24-hour supervision. |