

An elderly couple is walking away from the camera on a paved path in a park. The man on the left is wearing a grey sweater and brown pants, and the woman on the right is wearing a white and brown striped sweater and blue jeans. They are holding hands. The background is filled with trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of orange, yellow, and red. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Senior Fire Safety Book

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WHAT SHOULD A FAMILY CAREGIVER LOOK FOR SPECIFICALLY?

HERE ARE 10 AGE-FRIENDLY HOME SAFETY TIPS FOR SENIORS:

Remove fall hazards

Falls are the leading cause of injury for seniors. To reduce fall risk and encourage home safety for seniors, one of the most important things to do is to make the home fall-safe. You can achieve this by doing the following:

- Remove throw rugs. These may be decorative but often lack a rubberized backing to better grip the floor.
- Clean up piled clutter. This includes newspapers, loose clothes, and shoes.
- Discard or donate old furniture.
- Create a more open environment. This will be easier to do if Mom or Dad is still walking rather than using a wheelchair or walker. In the latter case, doorways should be at least 32" across to allow for access. Consider any tight corners before or after a doorway. These may restrict access and make maneuverability impossible.
- Avoid stretching extension cords across the floor.
- Make sure that your loved one wears non-slip footwear when inside.

Keep emergency numbers handy

Does your loved one own a cell phone? Watch mom or dad take or make a call – is there any difficulty? Cell phones can have many extra bells and whistles. Consider a more basic model. Seniors can find excessive options confusing, costly, and completely unnecessary. Equip the feature for larger keypad numbers and a display window. These will be easier to press and see. You can also set up a "call display" feature on a telephone. Mom or Dad can immediately recognize an incoming call as either from a family member or a stranger. Aging brains can't always remember emergency information. Make it easy for your loved one to call for help by posting a note in large letters by every phone and on the back of their cell phone. Make sure to list the following:

- 911
- Emergency contacts (family members and friends)
- Your senior's professional caregiving service
- Your senior's healthcare provider office
- Poison Control: **1-800-222-1222**

Protect against fire

Home safety for seniors also includes removing fire hazards from within the home.

- Change the batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors regularly (after seasonal time changes).
- Check the electric cords of all appliances and lamps in your loved one's home. Replace any frayed or damaged cords and limit the number of cords plugged into power strips.
- Remove candles from the home. If left burning and unattended, candles can start a fire.
- Remind seniors to stay low when exiting the home in a fire. This reduces the chance of smoke inhalation. Coach seniors on how to "stop, drop, and roll" if their clothes ignite.
- Discourage the use of space heaters. If your loved one insists on using one, place it at least three feet away from curtains, bedding, or furniture. Remind your loved one to turn off the space heater before going to bed or leaving the house.



Ensure a safe bathroom

- The bathroom can be the riskiest room in a senior's home. Falls and scalding often occur here. To ensure your loved one's safety, make sure that you address the following issues:
- Install grab bars in the shower and beside the toilet.
- Set the thermostat on the water heater no higher than 120° F to prevent accidental burns.
- Put rubber mats in the bathtub to prevent slipping.
- Consider replacing the original bathtub with a walk-in model instead.
- Place a special bathing chair in the tub. Your best choice for a bathing chair is one that will also fit in the shower.
- Install a hand-held showerhead. These can be easier to use, especially when cleaning hard-to-reach places.
- Replace the original toilet seat with a raised toilet seat with handlebars. Toilets should be between 17 and 19 inches in height. Seniors will find it easier to sit and stand.
- Remove the bathroom mirror. If mom or dad is showing early signs of dementia, seeing an unfamiliar face looking back at them may be startling.
- Install a nightlight in the bathroom. This will help seniors who may make repeated trips to the bathroom overnight. Install a nightlight or two on the route to the bathroom as well so that seniors can find their way.



Assess the bedroom

You may not think that danger can lurk in a senior's bedroom, but think again! Seniors can encounter several potential risks here. Do the following to make the bedroom safe for your loved one:

- Replace a sagging, softer mattress with a firmer one. This will be far more comfortable, provide more support, and not trap a resting senior.
- Fit the bedroom with a telescoping grab bar that extends between the floor and ceiling. My family placed one of these beside Mom's side of the bed for her to hold on to when getting in or out of bed.
- Replace the round bedroom doorknob with a single-lever instead. A senior can easily push this lever down to open the door. While you're at it, replace all other round doorknobs in the senior's home as well.

Assess lighting

Aging eyes don't always work as they once did. Seniors may misjudge or completely avoid darkened areas in their home.

- Replace any burnt-out light bulbs.
- Install new light fixtures.
- Install motion detection lighting inside and outside the home.
- Test all lighting by standing in one corner of a room and looking across the room. Can you see a clear path? If not, brighten things up with more lights.

Visit the senior's kitchen

The kitchen is often the heart of a home. Therefore, it seems only fitting that family caregivers should spend considerable time making this room safer for a senior.

- Pull down any stored items from higher heights. Gauge these items for usage. Are they still working? How often are they used? If they work and are still used frequently, store these items at lower levels.
- Is reaching for items required? If so, provide Mom or Dad with a stepstool. Look for a stool no more than one or two steps in height.
- Provide rubberized water faucet covers for the kitchen sink. These can be easier to grip and turn and are color-coded: red for hot and blue for cold. Family caregivers can often find these products at a senior's supply store.
- Replace standard "twist and turn" kitchen water faucet handles with "single-lever" handles instead. Seniors can find these far easier to use.
- Open the refrigerator. Wipe it clean and discard any stored foods passed their "best before" date. Do the same thing with pantry cupboards. When gro-

cery-shopping for mom or dad, family caregivers should think about smaller portions and nutrition. Seniors, after all, may eat less, eat less often, or forget to eat entirely. If mom or dad is living in a group home with a communal dining room, major daily meals will be provided. Mom or dad may still want to nibble in between meals so family caregivers can stock them up with healthy snacks (e.g. yogurt, granola bars, nuts, cheese and crackers, and fruit).



Consider any stairs

My parent's first retirement home was a beautiful property. However, the outside stairs posed a problem for my mother since she was losing strength and flexibility due to Parkinson's disease. As a result, she would routinely and doggedly pull herself up these stairs to reach the front door.

- Look into stair-lifts. Stair-lifts can be custom fitted inside or outside the senior's home. Call a qualified provider in your parent's home city and book an appointment to see what is possible. Stair-lifts can often carry heavy weight capacities. Safety mechanisms can stop the stair-lift if there is something blocking the way. They also operate on a battery system and will not fail in the case of a power outage.
- Test stair railings. You don't have to be a home handyman to do this. Grab the railing and try to shake it back and forth. If the railing wiggles (even somewhat), it's time to fix it. Tighten all nuts and bolts or replace the railing.
- Differentiate between stair steps. With partial vision, a senior may be unable to separate one step from the next. To increase home safety for seniors, family caregivers can paint stair tops a contrasting color. Stretching a piece of different-colored duct tape over the top of each stair can also make each step easier to spot.
- Clear the stairs (and outside sidewalks) of ice and snow in the wintertime. If you can't routinely do this yourself, hire a local service to do it. If no such service exists, offer the job to a neighbor's youngster with appropriate pay.

Remain safe in the home

Review common sense safety measures with your loved one. It can be tempting to open the door to someone who "looks nice" but beware. Here are some other things to do and to remind your senior about:

- Install a peephole in your senior's front door.
- Do not open the door to strangers when home alone. Place a reminder note on the wall beside the front door saying, "Do you know this person? If not, do not open the door."



- Always keep windows and doors locked.
- Install a mail slot in the front door to prevent mail theft.
- Do not agree to any telephone offers. Do not believe a caller's claims that a family member is in danger. Do not share your financial information or your Social Security number over the phone. If someone is in true danger, a police officer will come to visit you.
- Alert your loved one about ongoing scams targeting seniors.

Check in with them – frequently

Finally, home safety for seniors means checking in with your loved one. You, your loved one's neighbors, and a professional caregiver can help to make sure they are safe.

- Do you live in the same town or city as your aging parent? Drop in unannounced to get a better idea of how your parents are truthfully doing.
- Monitor a senior in extreme hot or cold weather (when the risk of heat stroke or frostbite is higher).
- Encourage your loved one to wear an alert necklace to call emergency services in the event of a fall.
- Remind a senior to move more slowly from one room to the next – there is often no reason to rush.
- Recommend your senior to call you for help before trying to tackle a cleaning or repair job independently.

Wondering how to support a loved one's goal of being able to age at home? We're here to help. Whether it's for one month or ten years, our caregivers can help your loved one live the life they want at home. Call a Care Advisor today at **650-770-1456** or click here to schedule a free assessment and learn more about how we can support your needs.

This can seem to be a long – and perhaps overwhelming – “to-do” list for family caregivers. Choose one job to start with or delegate the tasks between other family members. By safeguarding the senior's home, you will be encouraging the senior to remain at home – healthy and happy. And that means less worry for both of you over the long term!

Resources:

The National Council on Aging - The FBI

Learn about our senior care services here:

<https://homecareassistance.com/senior-elderly-care>

Senior Safety Telephone Numbers

Office of AAA Administration

Most senior services in New Jersey are administered locally by county-based Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).
ADRC/AAA Contact Information Nationwide Toll-Free Telephone Number **1-877-222-3737**



Office of Community Choice Options

Most seniors and people with disabilities in need of long-term care services prefer to get help in their home or in a community setting rather than in a nursing home. This office helps individuals learn about and access those services.

Office of Home & Community-Based Services Quality Assurance

This office administers a state-funded home and community-based program for seniors and their caregivers (JACC) and monitors the quality of care management services for this program and for the Managed Long-Term Services and Supports (MLTSS) program. MLTSS replaced the Global Options for Long Term Care (GO) program effective July 1, 2014.

Office of Support Service for the Aged

This office administers programs that help eligible seniors and individuals with disabilities pay prescription, Medicare, hearing aid and utility costs. These programs include PAAD and Senior Gold.

Toll-Free Telephone Numbers

Aging & Disability Resource Connection (ADRC)

There is an ADRC in every New Jersey county to help seniors, individuals with disabilities and their caregivers find out about and access important federal, state and local long-term services and supports.
Call your ADRC toll-free at **1-877-222-3737**.

Support Service for the Aged

Individuals with questions about the prescription assistance programs PAAD, Senior Gold and the AIDS Drug Distribution Program, or about getting help paying Medicare, utility or hearing aids costs, can call **1-800-792-9745**.



Prescription (PAAD & Senior Gold), Medicare, Hearing Aid & Utility Assistance

Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD)

PAAD provides coverage for prescribed legend drugs, insulin and insulin supplies for eligible individuals. Co-payments are \$5 for each covered generic and \$7 for each covered brand name drug. **1-800-792-9745**

Senior Gold Prescription Drug Discount Program

Senior Gold is a State-funded prescription program with a different co-payment structure and income eligibility guidelines than those for PAAD. **1-800-792-9745**

Lifeline Utility Assistance

Lifeline is a utility assistance program that offers \$225 to persons who meet the PAAD eligibility requirements or receive SSI to help offset home energy costs. **1-800-792-9745**

Hearing Aid Assistance for the Aged and Disabled (HAAAD)

HAAAD provides a \$100 reimbursement to eligible persons who purchase a hearing aid. **1-800-792-9745**

AIDS Drug Distribution Program (ADDP)

ADDP provides life-sustaining medications to low income individuals with no other source of payment for these drugs. **1 (877) 613-4533**

Specified Low Income Medicare Beneficiary (SLMB) and SLMB Qualified Individual-1 (QI-1)

These two programs pay partial or full Medicare Part B premiums for eligible New Jersey residents who are not financially eligible for the Qualified Medicare Beneficiary (QMB) program under New Jersey Medicaid (also known as New Jersey Care). **1-800-792-9745**

Adult Day Care

Adult Day Health Services

Adult Day Health Services provide a safe environment for frail elderly during the day when their caregivers are at work. For more information: **609-438-4749**

Alzheimer's Adult Day Services

This program partially subsidizes the purchase of adult day care services for persons with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. **1-888-280-6055**

Social Adult Day Care

This adult day care option is for individuals who do not need medical attention during the day, but may need supervision to ensure their safety and well-being. **1-877-222-3737**



Home and Community-Based Programs

Congregate Housing Services Program

This program provides supportive services to individuals who are elderly and disabled residing in selected subsidized housing facilities.

JACC (Jersey Assistance for Community Caregiving)

JACC is a state-funded program similar to MLTSS (see below), but for individuals with slightly higher incomes. **1-800-792-8820**

Managed Long-Term Services and Supports (MLTSS)

MLTSS uses a managed care approach for the delivery of publically-funded Medicaid long-term care services. MLTSS is designed to expand home and community-based services, promote community inclusion and ensure quality and efficiency.

Money Follows the Person (MFP)

This is a federal demonstration project that helps eligible individuals who have been residing in nursing facilities and developmental centers for six months or more to move into a community setting. **1-855-HOME-005 (1-855-466-3005)**

Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE)

PACE is an innovative Medicare program that provides frail individuals age 55 and older comprehensive medical and social services coordinated and provided by an interdisciplinary team of professionals in a community-based center and in their homes. PACE helps participants delay or avoid long-term nursing home care. **1-800-792-8820**

Statewide Respite Care Program

1-877-222-3737



Integrating social care and elder care has many benefits

Article in the Press by William A. Haseltine Published: March 2, 2020:

The social needs of older adults are multifaceted, diverse and, more often than not, unmet. This is especially true for older adults living with disabilities, low incomes or multiple chronic conditions. For many, day-to-day mobility is restricted to the community or the home, limiting their access to elder care services outside the scope of either.

Fortunately, emergent solutions such as person-centered long-term care are helping caregivers accommodate the full complexity of the people they serve. There is no escaping the fact, however, that it will take systems-level change for a solution so individualized to reach the entirety of an aging population. A new report published by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine proposes a paradigm shift that might just fit the bill – the integration of social care and medical care.

The report urges public health leaders and healthcare providers to acknowledge the relevance of social needs to medical needs and adjust their service delivery systems accordingly. Because social care and person-centered long-term care are both designed to give residents and patients the fullest continuum of supports and services possible, elder care providers would have much to gain from social care integration. The areas of overlap outlined below are just a few reasons why.

Home and community-based care

According to the National Academies report, enveloping social care organizations into the fold of the traditional healthcare systems would rebalance services between clinical and community settings, on the one hand, and make them more responsive to the social conditions of patients on the other. Older adults who have easy access to social and medical services as they age stand a better chance of managing certain health risks and behaviors early on, as well as remaining an active participant in community life.

Home- and community-based services also make it possible for older adults to spend as much of their lives as they can in the comfort of their own homes (including senior living, if that's where they live). Caregivers who provide home-based care, a branch of healthcare that generally falls under social care, are trained to identify and honor the natural rhythms and preferences of individuals. This example of person-centered care functions as a much-needed corrective to the current reality for many older adults, in which they shuffle from provider to provider and never come away fully satisfied.

Interdisciplinary care teams

Family caregivers, home health aides and gerontologists are just a few of the types of professionals who make up the social care workforce. Their unique perspective on the social needs of those in their care, especially in the case of older adults, should prove valuable to any healthcare provider accustomed to approaching and conceiving of health through a strictly medical lens.



With social care integration comes the opportunity to form interdisciplinary care teams that can coordinate, for any given resident or patient, the distribution of responsibilities between social and traditional healthcare workers. In addition to being incredibly convenient for older adults, who would alternatively spend unnecessary amounts of time and energy navigating fragmented social and medical service delivery systems, interdisciplinary care teams are more capable of maintaining stable relationships between caregivers and with patients.

Interdisciplinary care, in addition to bridging gaps between services, also alleviates providers of the burdens produced by redundancy, miscommunication and other inefficiencies caused by poor coordination. In Uppsala, Sweden, for example, a central care coordination group formed by doctors, occupational therapists, nurses and municipal support agents does this for the town's primary care physicians by conducting care-planning meetings for their patients. The delegation of that task alone not only frees up overburdened physicians but also opens up a healthy channel of ongoing communication between providers.

Shared care philosophy

Social care integration, like person-centered elder care, can equip healthcare providers and systems around the world with the tools, knowledge and capabilities needed to treat older adults with the comfort, respect and dignity they deserve. It also is cost-effective, as demonstrated by initiatives such as the CAPABLE (Community Aging in Place – Advancing Better Living for Elders) program, which yielded cost savings six times the amount spent on implementation.

A care philosophy that emphasizes the whole of a person, rather than reducing an individual to his or her health problems and limitations, is precisely what older adults deserve. Although it will require substantial policy support and organizational buy-in, countries that integrate social and medical care are building health systems that can live up to that philosophy – for the aging populations of today and for future generations.



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