

# A HELPFUL SENIOR CARE GLOSSARY.

## *Learn these 35 terms before searching for a nursing home.*

As you begin to navigate the various options available for senior care, you'll likely see a large amount of specialized vocabulary used in reference to housing, medical care and personal support. Encountering all of this unfamiliar lingo may be frustrating and confusing at a time when you most need uncomplicated help and clear information. Here, we've gathered the most frequently used terminology referring to nursing homes, assisted living communities and memory care to help you find the way toward the best fit in care and services for your loved one.

### ***Activities of Daily Living (ADLs):***

Day-to-Day routines and actions, for example eating, eating, grooming, dressing, toileting and other daily activities. Additional daily tasks can consist of administering medications, moving around or other types of personal care and everyday maintenance.

### ***ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act):***

Civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability. After being introduced in 1988, the ADA was signed into law in 1990 and later amended in 2008. (Resource: Federal ADA information)

### ***Administrator:***

Licensed professional who works to supervise clinical and administrative affairs of nursing homes and related facilities, as well as oversees the general management and operations of a senior care community, such as an assisted living facility or nursing home.

### ***Adult Day Care:***

Non-residential service offering meaningful social programs, as well as transitional care and rehabilitation services, for seniors. Most often, these day programs provide professionally staffed, group setting for those who are physically or emotionally disabled and could benefit from a protective environment throughout the day before returning home for the evening.

### ***Aging in Place:***

A concept that advocates allowing individuals to remain in their living environment of choice for as long as possible during the aging process despite any physical or mental decline that may occur.

### ***Alzheimer's disease:***

Chronic neurodegenerative disease that impairs an individual's cognitive function, with symptoms including short-term memory loss, problems with language, disorientation, mood swings, loss of motivation, not managing self care and behavior problems. Alzheimer's disease is the cause behind 60-70 percent of dementia cases and both genetic and environmental factors have been found to play a part in causing it. (Resource: Alzheimer's Association)

### ***Ambulatory:***

Able to walk about or move independently, in reference to those individuals who are not bedridden or hospitalized long-term.

### ***Assisted Living:***

A category of senior care that includes various combinations of living arrangements, support services and health care. Typical services include prepared meals, laundry, housekeeping, medication management and help with day-to-day living



### ***Caregiver:***

The person who takes primary responsibility for someone who cannot fully care for himself or herself. This person may be a family member, a trained professional or another individual who assists in the management of disability, illness or problems related to aging, usually associated with Alzheimer's disease.

### ***Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC):***

A residential facility, sometimes known as a life care community, that offers several levels of on-site senior care, including independent living, assisted living and skilled nursing care. These communities usually provide a continuum of senior housing, support services and health care, all within one site.

### ***Dementia:***

Refers to a serious loss of cognitive functions exhibited in a group of symptoms that may include a decrease in the ability to think and remember, emotional problems and difficulties with language that interfere with daily functioning. The most common type of dementia is Alzheimer's disease, which makes up 60% to 70% of cases. (Resource: Alzheimer's Association - What is dementia?)

### ***Elder Care:***

Encompasses a wide variety of senior care services focusing on the unique needs and requirements of seniors who desire to age with dignity. Refers broadly to any of the following: assisted living, adult day care, long term care, nursing homes (often referred to as residential care), hospice care and home care.

### ***Gerontology:***

A relatively new academic discipline which studies the social, cultural, psychological, cognitive and biological effects of aging.

### ***HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996):***

United States legislation that was designed to give patients greater control over their personal health information and disclosure. Of particular interest to seniors, this act states the requirements that a long-term care policy must follow in order for the premiums paid to be deducted as medical expenses and for unpaid benefits to not be considered as taxable income. (Resource: Federal HIPAA information)

### ***Home Health Care:***

The provision of medical and nursing services from licensed providers and professionals in an individual's own home.

### ***Hospice Care:***

A philosophy of care that focuses on providing comfort to chronically ill, terminally ill or seriously ill patients' pain and symptoms and attending to their emotional and spiritual needs rather than taking lifesaving measures. Hospice care may be Hospice care can include medical, counseling and social services provided either in-home or at a specialized center or hospital.

### ***Independent Living:***

A community setting for seniors who have the physical and mental capacity to live independently, requiring minimal assistance. Most independent living residences provide options for services such as meals, housekeeping, social activities and transportation and promote an active, healthy senior lifestyle.

### ***Long-Term Care:***

Provision of care given in the form of medical and support services to individuals who have lost some or all of their capacity to function due to an illness or disability.



### ***Long-Term Care Insurance:***

Privately issued insurance policy which reimburses policyholders for an eligible daily amount covering some of the costs of nursing home, assisted living, memory care and home health services. Premium costs are based on a number of factors, such as age, health, type of covered benefits/services, length of deductible period and duration of benefits. (Resource: Federal long-term care insurance information)

### ***Medicaid:***

Public assistance health insurance program funded by individual states in the U.S. offering benefits to individuals who are unable to pay for health care, the disabled and the elderly. If individuals qualify based on income eligibility criteria, Medicaid can only be accessed when all other assets and funds are depleted. Medicaid may reimburse nursing homes for the long-term care of qualifying seniors. (Resource: Medicaid.gov)

### ***Medicare:***

A U.S. federal medical insurance program for those 65 and older, as well as individuals with disabilities, managed by the Social Security Administration. Medicare provides for hospital and skilled nursing care through Medicare Part A and for physician services, therapies and home health care through Medicare Part B. (Resource: Medicare.gov)

### ***Medical Director:***

A healthcare provider who works with doctors and family members to make sure residents of a senior care facility receive the personal care they need, creating and implementing important policies regarding treatments and healthcare. A staff medical director may sometimes serve as residents' primary physician.

### ***Medication Management/Medication Administration:***

A set of rules and instructions for managing self-administered medication. These plans, often used in assisted living communities, describe when and how to administer medication, as well as when to alert residents' primary care physicians. Specifically, residents must take the medication on their own, although staff at a community can remind them to take the medication.

### ***Medigap Insurance/Medicare Supplemental Insurance:***

PAN additional insurance program that covers costs not paid for by Medicare. These medical costs may include deductible payments, prescription drugs or co-insurance. Does not provide benefits for long-term care. (Resource: Medicare.gov)

### ***Memory Care:***

A specialized area in many continuing care communities devoted to caring for residents with dementia, Alzheimer's disease or other cognitive impairments. Specific on-site services, programs and events dedicated to improving memory may be offered.

### ***Non-Ambulatory:***

Unable to walk without assistance, often referring to individuals who are confined to a bed or in the hospital.

### ***Nursing Home:***

A residential care facility where seniors have access to nursing care at all hours of the day and night and are provided with meals, group programming and basic medical services. May also be referred to as a skilled nursing facility or convalescent home.

### ***Occupational Therapy:***

Prescribed activities designed by licensed therapists to help patients relearn basic tasks of daily living.



### ***Palliative Care:***

An area of health care that focuses on providing pain relief and preventing chronic suffering, relieving symptoms such as pain, shortness of breath, nausea, loss of appetite and other concerns that arise with advanced illness. The goal of palliative care is to improve the quality of life for patients and their families, encompassing physical, emotional, spiritual and social concerns.

### ***Physical Therapy:***

Prescribed treatment plans administered by licensed physical therapists in order to help restore an individual's function and strength after illness or injury. Mechanical methods such as massage, heat treatment and regulated exercise are used to improve physical mobility.

### ***Rehabilitation:***

The practice of providing therapeutic care to individuals requiring intensive physical, occupational or speech therapy with the goal of restoring them to a former level of functioning.

### ***Respite Care:***

Temporary care services that are used when an individual's usual caregiver needs a temporary relief from their duties, ranging from several hours to days. May be provided as in-home assistance, short nursing home stays or adult day care.

### ***Skilled Nursing Care:***

A category of residential care for seniors that provides around-the-clock skilled care for individuals who generally need assistance for most or all Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and is generally thought of as one step below hospital acute care. Skilled nursing communities offer medical care by trained medical staff, such as a registered nurse or therapist, 24 hours a day, and may also include rehabilitation services, memory support services and other types of therapeutic care.

### ***Transfer:***

The task of moving a non-ambulatory individual from one place to another, such as from a bed to a wheelchair.

### ***Transitional Care:***

A type of specialized short-term care meant for individuals who are being discharged from acute care, such as hospitalization, but are not yet ready to return to their home. Generally includes rehabilitative services.

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