

# senior review

FREE

November 2024

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**November is Home Care/  
Hospice Care, Alzheimer’s  
and Dementia Care Month**

A Senior Magazine for Living a Healthier, Smarter and More Active Life in Wausau

## Selling Your Home – Step by Step *By Dave Olson, Realtor®, RE/MAX EXCEL*

Reaching the decision to sell your home was NOT easy. Once the decision is made, how do we get “sold” from here?

Selling your home need NOT be a stressful or difficult endeavor. As a senior myself, I recommend reassessing your willingness to do it yourself. Consider recruiting the assistance of professionals. There are qualified professionals that can help with each step.

Begin by eliminating the things you’ve acquired over the years and don’t need or use. Most folks do this themselves or may want to have their children or friends assist them. Have a garage or yard sale or donate to your favorite charity store. For major reductions of possessions (sometimes needed for a move across country, or if downsizing or for other reasons) there are estate sale professionals that specialize in dramatically reducing your things, and can put some money in your pocket, too!

Select a trusted Real Estate Professional. As a Senior Real Estate Specialist, I strongly recommend finding an agent with that certification. Agents qualified to work specifically with Seniors are an invaluable resource and can refer other pros you may need along the way. A qualified Realtor will develop a Comparative Market Analysis. Similar to an appraisal, a CMA establishes an expectation of sell price. This pleasantly surprises many sellers with the strong values we currently see in the home market. Your Real Estate pro should also advise on repairs you need to make or help with decluttering suggestions. My team offers home staging, which can increase a home’s market appeal using stylish staging items. Choose a professional Realtor that does quality professional photography and video as part of their marketing package.

Your trusted financial professional, attorney, or accountant should be consulted to ensure that proceeds of your home sale will be handled properly. Have this meeting PRIOR to selling.

When time to list, you can approve showings. Most sellers leave the home during showings, but if that isn’t practical, sellers can stay. I recommend an open house the first weekend after listing. Open houses are a great way to bring potential buyers in without sales pressure and provide excellent marketing for your home through sound advertising.

An accepted offer comes when a home is well marketed. That triggers the timeline for moving. There will be an appraisal by the buyer’s lender if financing the purchase. There could be a home inspection, if included in the offer. A qualified Realtor manages those steps with you and brings your home sale to closing.

Professional movers may be the right choice for packing and moving. You sure can tackle this on your own or recruit young and strong family members if you wish. For a less stressful move, trust a pro! A nice touch is to have your home professionally cleaned for the new owner.

Closing and moving day is next. Done with trusted pros along the way you can relax and enjoy this day and the excitement the future holds!





## SMART *and* SWEET

White sugar can raise your risk for heart disease and cause your blood sugar to spike, then crash. But you don't need to go without! Instead, go natural with one of these four options - less fructose and more nutritional benefits.

**1. DATE SYRUP** Full of fiber, it also offers inflammation-fighting and mood-lifting health perks. Add a dash of it to ease up spicy dishes.

**2. MAPLE SYRUP** We're talking "100% pure organic" to score essential minerals like thyroid-boosting manganese. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons to balance out any bitterness in a vinegary salad dressing, and sub 3/4 cup for every cup of sugar when baking - just be sure to reduce other liquids by about a quarter too.

**3. COCONUT SUGAR** Sub in one cup of these caramel-colored crystals for one cup white sugar to whip up baked goods that promote a happy tum, courtesy of the good bacteria from coconut's star fiber, inulin.

**4. HONEY** It's heart-healthy antioxidant and antibacterial properties (which make it great for soothing soar throats) are destroyed by too much heat, so skip it in baked goods. Instead, use it in drinks and on fruit.



## .195 SECOND

That's how long it takes for you to think about whether that chocolate cake is healthy after your first thought, which is always about taste, according to a study in Psychological Science. Researchers say you can overcome your natural gimme impulse by waiting a second longer to weigh the pros and cons of that cake before throwing it down the hatch.



## Today's Plan ... Becomes Tomorrow's Security

Planning ahead is one of the most meaningful gifts you can give your family.

A funeral service is meant to honor your life, but just as important, it also becomes a vital part of a healthy grieving process for the family and friends who will begin to learn to live without you.

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**Graphic Designer:** Brigit Olson  
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**Advertising:** 715-831-0325  
seniorreviewnewspapers@gmail.com

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# 10 Early Signs and Symptoms of Alzheimer's and Dementia

**A**lzheimer's disease and dementia are progressive neurological disorders that primarily affect cognitive functions, such as memory, thinking, and reasoning. Recognizing the early signs and symptoms is crucial for early diagnosis and intervention. Here are ten early indicators that someone may be developing Alzheimer's or dementia:



**1. Memory Loss:** One of the most common early signs is memory loss that disrupts daily life. This can manifest as forgetting recently learned information, important dates, or events. While occasional memory lapses are normal, forgetting important information frequently could indicate a problem.

**2. Difficulty Performing Familiar Tasks:** People with Alzheimer's or dementia may find it challenging to complete tasks they have done regularly, such as cooking a meal or managing finances. They may forget the steps involved or have trouble concentrating.

**3. Disorientation and Confusion:** Individuals may become disoriented about time, place, or even their own identity. They may forget where they are or how they got there. Confusion about seasons or passage of time can also occur.

**4. Difficulty with Language and Communication:** Early-stage Alzheimer's can lead to difficulties in finding the right words during conversations or understanding what others are saying. People may struggle with vocabulary, have trouble following conversations, or repeat themselves frequently.

**5. Poor Judgment and Decision-Making:** Individuals may exhibit poor judgment in situations involving money or personal hygiene. They might make questionable decisions that are out of character, such as giving large sums of money to telemarketers.

**6. Mood and Personality Changes:** Mood swings, apathy, or withdrawal from social activities can occur in the early stages of Alzheimer's or dementia. Individuals may become irritable, anxious, or easily upset without apparent reason.

**7. Misplacing Items and Unable to Retrace Steps:** A common early sign is putting items in unusual places and then being unable to retrace one's steps to find them. This can lead to accusations of theft or paranoia.

**8. Decreased or Poor Judgment:** Individuals may show signs of decreased judgment, such as dressing inappropriately for the weather or neglecting personal grooming habits.

**9. Withdrawal from Work or Social Activities:** People with Alzheimer's or dementia may start to withdraw from hobbies, social activities, work projects, or sports. They may have trouble keeping up with a favorite team or hobby.

**10. Changes in Vision and Spatial Relationships:** Difficulties with reading, judging distances, and determining color or contrast can occur due to changes in vision associated with Alzheimer's or dementia.

It's important to note that experiencing one or more of these signs does not necessarily mean someone has Alzheimer's or dementia. However, if these signs are persistent and interfere with daily life, it's essential to consult a healthcare professional for a comprehensive evaluation.

Early diagnosis allows for better management of symptoms, access to available treatments, and the opportunity to participate in clinical trials that may help advance research toward a cure. Additionally, early intervention can provide individuals and their families with support and resources to navigate the challenges of Alzheimer's or dementia.

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# New Blood Test for Alzheimer's Diagnosis By Becky Streefer

Researchers have recently discovered that combining two blood tests used for diagnosing cognitive decline—plasma phosphorylated tau 217 (p-tau217) and amyloid 42/40 ratio—produces a 90% accuracy rate in determining the presence of Alzheimer's disease in the brain. As Alzheimer's can be somewhat tricky to diagnose because its symptoms can mimic other types of cognitive decline, this could be a significant breakthrough for the Alzheimer's community.



score was accurate in 90% of the cases in the study of over 1,200 people undergoing treatment for cognitive decline.

These blood tests, once vetted, could have a large impact on diagnosis and treatment for Alzheimer's. A person's brain can form amyloid deposits as young as 30 or 40 years old, decades before any symptoms begin. If caught early, people could make lifestyle changes and take preventative measures. Researchers can also conduct

The p-tau217 test can diagnose mild cognitive impairment and early-stage Alzheimer's. The test measures the level of the tau protein 217 and also identifies if beta-amyloids are present. Tau tangles can be symptoms of other neurological diseases potentially causing memory loss at some point, but amyloid plaques are a key feature of Alzheimer's that cluster on the memory center of the brain. If the tau protein is elevated but amyloid is not present, it is not Alzheimer's but an indication of another type of dementia.

new trials to help them learn more about the disease from an earlier standpoint and develop better medications. Additionally, an accurate test will free up services and treatment for those who actually have Alzheimer's and have not simply been misdiagnosed or missed-diagnosed by the current standards of screening.

Though the p-tau217 test is very promising, combining it with the amyloid 42/40 test increases the accuracy of the results—this is called amyloid probability score. The amyloid 42/40 ratio blood test measures two specific types of proteins that have been linked to Alzheimer's. Researchers confirmed their results using spinal fluid taps and PET scans, which is currently the only verified way to diagnose Alzheimer's with certainty. The amyloid probability

Since these blood tests are still being researched, it is unclear if and when they will be made available to the public. The tests need to be verified on a wider scale of study, and then they have to be distributed to physicians who will need to be educated on guidelines and nuances of the test. However, the prospect and potential magnitude of this breakthrough is extremely exciting.

*Source: LaMotte, Sandee. "Alzheimer's blood test catches 90% of early dementia cases, study finds." CNN. 28 JUL 2024. <https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/28/health/alzheimer-blood-test-p-tau-217-wellness/index.html>.*

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The Marathon County Housing Association and Cedar Creek Senior Living is accepting applications for efficiency, 1- & 2-bedroom apartments. **Eligible applicants are 55+ years or disabled.**

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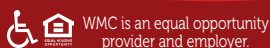
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# Knowing If You Have an Appropriate Retirement Strategy

By Cole Bruner, President of Buska Wealth Management

As retirement approaches, evaluating whether your retirement strategy is sound and aligned with your goals is essential. An effective retirement plan can not only ensure financial stability but can also provide peace of mind as you transition into this new phase of life. Here are some key factors to consider when assessing the appropriateness of your retirement strategy.

## Define Your Retirement Goals

The first step in evaluating your retirement strategy is to clearly define what you want your retirement to look like. Consider your desired lifestyle: will you travel extensively, pursue hobbies, or relocate to a different area? Understanding your vision will help you estimate the financial resources required to achieve it. Discussing your goals with family members can also provide additional insights into your expectations and aspirations.

## Assess Your Current Financial Situation

Take a comprehensive look at your current financial situation. This includes your savings, investments, debts, and overall net worth. Gather information on your retirement accounts (such as 401(k)s and IRAs), other investments, and any assets you own. This assessment will give you a clearer picture of your starting point and how much you need to save moving forward.

## Calculate Income Needs in Retirement

Estimating how much income you'll need during retirement is a critical step. A common guideline suggests that retirees may need around 70-80% of their pre-retirement income. However, your specific needs may vary based on your lifestyle choices and potential healthcare costs. Creating a detailed budget that includes anticipated expenses will help you determine how much you should aim to save.

## Evaluate Your Investment Strategy

A well-balanced investment portfolio is essential for a successful retirement strategy. Consider your risk tolerance and how it aligns with your investment choices. Younger individuals can often afford to take more risks, investing in stocks for growth, while those nearing retirement may need to adopt a more conservative approach to protect their savings. Regularly reviewing and rebalancing your portfolio can help ensure it remains aligned with your retirement timeline and financial goals.

## Factor in Social Security and Other Income Sources

Social Security can play a significant role in your retirement income. Review your estimated benefits and consider when you plan to start taking them, as the timing can affect the amount you receive. Additionally, think about other potential income sources, such as pensions, rental income, or part-time work, which can supplement your retirement savings.

## Monitor and Adjust Your Strategy

A retirement strategy is not static; it requires ongoing evaluation and adjustment. Changes in market conditions, personal circumstances, and economic factors can impact your financial plan. Establish a routine for reviewing your retirement strategy—at least annually. This practice allows you to make necessary adjustments to your savings, investments, and spending plans.

## Consult with a Financial Advisor

If you're unsure about the adequacy of your retirement strategy, consider seeking the guidance of a financial advisor. A professional can provide personalized insights and help you develop a comprehensive plan tailored to your unique situation. They can also assist with tax strategies and estate planning, ensuring that you're well-prepared for the future.



Determining if you have an appropriate retirement strategy involves a thorough evaluation of your goals, current financial status, income needs, and investment approach. By regularly assessing and adjusting your plan, you can enhance your chances of achieving a secure and fulfilling retirement. Taking proactive steps now will pay dividends later, allowing you to enjoy your retirement years with confidence and peace of mind.

Are you prepared for possible bumps in the road?

## 8 OBSTACLES TO RETIREMENT

As retirement draws closer there's plenty of excitement. After all, you're about to have the time you've always needed to do the things you've always wanted. But mixed in with that excitement may be a healthy dose of anxiety. Do you have an appropriate strategy? Can your finances hold up to a retirement that might last for more than two decades?

One place to start is making sure your finances are prepared for some potential obstacles.

Reach out to us today so we can help you achieve the kind of retirement you've worked so hard for.

- 1 Insufficient income
- 2 Taxes
- 3 Market downturns
- 4 Rising inflation
- 5 Medicare
- 6 Long-term care
- 7 The loss of a spouse
- 8 Life expectancy

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November is National Home Care Month!



# The Landing Medicare 101

by Clay Marketing Group



followed by



## YMCA Senior Memberships

by YMCA Member Services

**Two Presentations During Medicare Enrollment Period**

**Friday, November 15, 9:00 - 11:00am**  
**Monday, December 2, 11:00am - 1:00pm**

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### Medicare 101

It's important to note that Medicare enrollment period for 2025 runs from October 15 to December 7, 2024, and all of the information coming at persons that are eligible for Medicare can be daunting.

Join Josh Reissmann of Clay Marketing Group, powered by American Senior Benefits, as he will be talking about the multiple areas of Medicare enrollment; including the four Categories, A-B-C and D of Medicare, Eligibility, and How to Enroll in Medicare and things to consider as you compare health coverage options, to then become more comfortable with what questions to ask, so as to get the answers you need to make decisions that will best meet your personal needs.

followed by

### YMCA Member Services

The YMCA Membership Staff, JuliAnn Sklow & Lynn Wilkowski, will walk through options available for YMCA Memberships going into 2025. They will discuss membership rates and options available as well as benefits of being members.



Knowing what's available to you begins with information and conversations. Join us for this opportunity to educate yourself on Medicare choices and YMCA membership options.

### Registration Required

Members & Non-Members: Free to Attend  
Non-Members: *Please to stop at Main desk to YMCA to Register*

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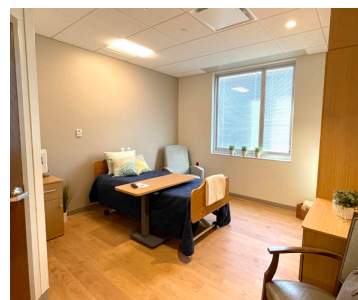
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# Information and Support for Family Caregivers During National Family Caregivers Month *By Hougum Law Firm*

Did you know that the month of November is dedicated to honoring and supporting the family caregivers of our nation? During November, National Family Caregivers Month formally salutes the work of all the compassionate family caregivers. These family members are indispensable and invaluable to our society. In fact, without their year-round aid, millions of seniors would have serious difficulties.



Did you realize that there are over 53 million of these compassionate individuals throughout the nation? In honor of National Family Caregivers Month, we would like to take the opportunity to share some very important and much needed resources about caregivers and the seniors they care for.

Caregivers need respite care. Caregiving can be a tremendous sacrifice in terms of time, money and opportunity costs, especially if a senior loved one has a physical or mental health disability. Often, caregivers are at risk of developing their own health problems due to exhaustion and unmet needs. When respite care is available, caregivers can take breaks and care for themselves.

- **ARCH National Respite Network and Resource Center** — ARCH helps senior caregivers find appropriate respite care programs and services for their elder loved ones. The National Respite Locator available on their website provides a state-by-state list of facilities that can help give family members a break.
- **National Adult Day Services Association** — This is a professional organization that provides adult day care consumer resources, including an adult day care locator and counseling on choosing the right facility for a senior loved one.
- **Senior Corps and Senior Corps' Senior Companions** program provides respite care by matching older volunteers with seniors who need help with daily tasks.

Seniors need health care. Are you aware of all the options available to seniors today? We have a list so share with you.

- **Department of Veterans Affairs** — The V.A. provides a vast array of support services for qualifying senior veterans and their families, including a paid family caregiver benefit. The program is called Veteran-Directed Home and Community Based Services. Elder law attorneys are strong advocates for senior veterans' rights and often help secure V.A. benefits if they are denied.

- **Medicare** — Medicare is a massive federal health program for people aged 65 and older. Senior caregivers might not realize that Medicare covers home health and skilled nursing services in many circumstances.
- **Medicaid** — Medicaid is a federal-state partnership program that provides health coverage for people with limited income and assets. Medicaid can also pay for long-term care in nursing homes.
- **State Health Insurance Assistance Programs, or SHIPs** — provide free support to Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers. You can find additional information and assistance on their website. SHIP is especially helpful during Medicare's annual open enrollment period in the fall.

The time to start legal planning for those you love is now. Do you have questions about what you or your aging loved ones need? From advance directives to estate planning to long-term care proactive planning, we are here to help. If you or someone you know would like more information or specific guidance on legal issues or Medicaid planning, we encourage you to contact an elder law attorney. For more information, call 715.843.5001 or email [info@hougumlaw.com](mailto:info@hougumlaw.com).

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# Keeping the Golden Years Golden By Peterson/Kraemer Funeral Homes and Crematory

Once again, autumn is upon us. The telltale signs are all around...the crisp morning air, the changing colors from the lush greens of summer to the rich fall hues of gold and yellow, the v-formations of geese in flight, heading to their winter homes in the south. All of these signs spell the inevitable end to the long daylight hours of summer and the encroaching cold and dark of winter. With it comes the necessity of preparations that must be made for winter...storm windows put up, leaves raked, firewood cut and stacked, and winter coats brought out of storage.



The changing of the seasons is a certainty, one with which we have become familiar and even comfortable. We know the routine, we prepare accordingly and face the sometimes bleak and depressing winter months with at least some comfort knowing that we have done all that we could to prepare ourselves for its arrival.

Isn't it ironic that old age and death are as much a certainty for each of us as the constant change of the seasons, but yet so many of us are completely unprepared for their inevitable arrival? Obviously, we do not know the number on our days, and we cannot mark the date of our passing on the calendar as we can the first day of autumn or the last shopping day before Christmas. But we can all be assured of the reality of their arrival at some time.

Unlike the changing of the seasons, our own aging and mortality are not part of familiar routines. They are certainly not comfortable topics to ponder, so we often choose to ignore them and thus we fail to make preparations that might ease the burden of their arrival. Can any of us truly "prepare" for death? Emotionally, probably not, but there are steps that each of us can take to prepare for it that can afford us and our loved ones some comfort and peace of mind and help keep our "Golden Years" golden! Some of these preparations include:

- Pre-planning and pre-funding your funeral arrangements
- Setting up a Living Will
- Assigning a Power of Attorney for Health Care
- Assigning a Power of Attorney for Finances
- Creating a Will and/or Trust
- Enrolling in a travel protection plan

As we enter our retirement years and look forward to a life of less work and more leisure, having all of these issues decided upon in advance is a great way to pave the way to truly "Golden" years and help ease the burden of worry for us and our loved ones. There are experienced professionals available to walk you and your family through every step of the process.

Not sure how to begin? Start by contacting Peterson/Kraemer Funeral Home to discuss all of these preparations and help you "Keep the Golden Years Golden". Our Certified Pre-Planning Consultant, Anna Zoromski-Linde will discuss and answer questions about pre-planning and pre-funding your funeral arrangements. Give us a call at 715-845-6900, or fill out our preplanning guide to get started: <https://www.petersonkraemer.com/prearrangements-form>

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## Military Honors

by Sarah Zuelke, Assistant Manager and Funeral Director -  
Brainard Funeral Home



Veteran's Day, originally established to commemorate the end of World War I on November 11, 1918, has evolved into a significant occasion for Americans to express gratitude toward those who have served in the military. It is a day dedicated to honoring the sacrifices made by countless veterans who have fought to protect our freedoms. The most immediate way to thank a veteran is through acts that we can do regularly. Something as small as a heartfelt thank you and a handshake. However, how do we pay tribute to these veterans and honor their legacies after they have passed?

One way in which we as a funeral home encourage this is through military honors. Military funeral honors include a series of ceremonial practices designed to pay respect to veterans and active-duty service members. The core elements of these honors typically encompass the playing of Taps, the presentation of the flag by a uniformed active-duty officer to the family and the twenty one gun salute performed by our local VFW or American Legion rifle detail. These honors are available at no cost to all veterans with an honorable discharge and active-duty members. Every veteran's life story is unique, and their funeral honors can be tailored to reflect that individuality. Families have the option to choose the full honors package or select specific elements that resonate most with them. Whether they prefer the complete ceremony or wish to focus on particular aspects, we are committed to accommodating their wishes.

When a veteran passes away, the significance of their service is remembered, and one of the most meaningful ways to honor their sacrifice is through burial at a national cemetery. These cemeteries provide a final resting place that reflects the dignity, respect, and gratitude owed to those who have served. National cemeteries are specifically designated areas where veterans and their eligible family members can be laid to rest with honor. Key aspects of national cemeteries include free burial benefits, including gravesite with a headstone/marker for veterans with an honorable discharge. Burial at a national cemetery provides not only a final resting place but also a space for families and friends to reflect on the life and service of their loved one. We are lucky enough to have a beautiful National Cemetery in our backyard, Northwoods National Cemetery in Harshaw. Recently our funeral homes were able to take a tour of the grounds, and we were blown away by what they are able to provide. We highly encourage any veteran to explore the Northwoods National Cemetery, or other National Cemetery, as not only a final resting place, but as a symbol of their service to this country.

Thank you Veterans and God Bless America.



# When It's Time to Look into Home Care and How to Start That Process

As our loved ones age or face health challenges, ensuring they receive the appropriate care becomes a priority. Home care is often a desirable option, allowing individuals to stay in the comfort of their own homes while receiving the assistance they need. Recognizing when it's time to consider home care and understanding how to initiate this process can ensure a smooth transition and peace of mind.

## RECOGNIZING THE NEED FOR HOME CARE

**1. Decline in Physical Health:** If an individual experiences difficulty with daily activities such as bathing, dressing, cooking, or moving around, it may be time to consider home care. Frequent falls, loss of mobility, and chronic health conditions that require constant monitoring are clear indicators.

**2. Cognitive Decline:** Memory loss, confusion, and other cognitive impairments, such as those seen in dementia or Alzheimer's disease, can compromise a person's ability to live independently. If you notice these symptoms, home care can provide necessary support.

**3. Emotional and Social Needs:** Loneliness and isolation can have severe impacts on an individual's mental health. Home care services often include companionship, which can alleviate feelings of loneliness and improve overall well-being.

**4. Caregiver Burnout:** Family members often take on caregiving roles, which can be physically and emotionally exhausting. If the primary caregiver is experiencing burnout, it might be beneficial to seek professional home care assistance.

## STARTING THE HOME CARE PROCESS

**1. Assess the Needs:** Begin by assessing the specific needs of your loved one. This includes understanding their medical conditions, daily living requirements, and personal preferences. This assessment can be done in consultation with healthcare professionals.

**2. Research Home Care Providers:** Look for home care agencies or individual caregivers with good reputations. Seek recommendations from doctors, friends, or community organizations. Check reviews and ratings online and ensure the providers are licensed and accredited.

**3. Understand the Types of Services:** Home care services range from medical care provided by licensed professionals to non-medical support, such as help with household chores and personal care. Identify the type of care your loved one requires to ensure you choose the right service.

**4. Financial Considerations:** Home care can be expensive, so it's essential to understand the costs involved. Check if the services are covered by insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid. Some agencies offer sliding scale fees based on income, and there may be financial assistance programs available.

**5. Interview Potential Caregivers:** Conduct thorough interviews with potential caregivers or agencies. Discuss the specific needs of your loved one, ask about their experience and qualifications, and ensure they are compatible with your family's values and expectations. It's important to feel comfortable and confident with the chosen caregiver.

**6. Create a Care Plan:** Develop a detailed care plan that outlines the services needed, the schedule, and any specific instructions or preferences. This plan should be reviewed regularly and adjusted as needed.

**7. Monitor and Evaluate:** Once care has begun, continuously monitor the situation. Ensure that the caregiver is meeting your loved one's needs and that there is good communication between all parties involved. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the care and make changes if necessary.

## CONCLUSION

Choosing home care for a loved one is a significant decision that requires careful consideration and planning. By recognizing the signs that indicate the need for home care and following a structured process to find the right services, you can ensure that your loved one receives the best possible care in the comfort of their own home. This approach not only supports their health and well-being but also provides peace of mind for the entire family.



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# Commemorating the Power of Caring

By Christine Eggers

I didn't set out to become a nurse. But here I am, 30 years in, with no intention of stopping. I've worked in other settings and as an instructor, but home health and hospice are where I find my heart. When I was teaching, I went back to work as a nurse on weekends because I missed it.



Every day in my line of work looks different. Today I am providing respite to a farmer whose wife has dementia because he needs to harvest his crops. Tomorrow I will set up medications for one client, perform wound care on another, and chaperone a clinic appointment for a third. For some, I coordinate and supervise a team of care providers. For others, I complete weekly health assessments to keep them out of the hospital. My clients wish to remain at home, and I solve the problems that might prevent them from doing so. My best day is when I solve a problem before it has even begun.

Home health is something of a calling. Years ago, I saw it as a means of changing the world for one person at a time. When I do my job well, it doesn't look like I'm doing a thing. If I prevent a client's illness or injury, those things never happen, and that is a pleasure all its own. We have to be the kind of people who take great joy in being the only person who knows we accomplished anything at all. That's fundamental to all nursing, but it's particularly so for home health.

When I was in nursing school, people would ask if I was going on to medical school. Intelligent women were supposed to become doctors--we were liberated and free to pursue more prestigious occupations than nursing. That just wasn't the path for me. Doing a job that looks like you're not doing anything isn't for the faint of heart. Most people want others to see something great in themselves--we want credit or a title. There are no accolades if the illness or injury never happens in the first place. There might even be complaints about the things we do to make sure nothing happens.

This Home Health and Hospice Month, we are commemorating the power of caring. Often these appreciation days, weeks, and months focus on dramatic moments or great sacrifice. I'd like to recognize the absence of drama as the great event it is--like appreciating getting home from work without a car accident. We need to acknowledge and appreciate not falling and breaking a hip, not developing a sacral ulcer, or contracting pneumonia, and living another day at home with control over our lives because we are there. So, if you have home health and it doesn't seem like they are doing anything because since they've been providing your care nothing has happened, treat that nothing like the wonderful service it is.

Happy Home Health and Hospice Month!



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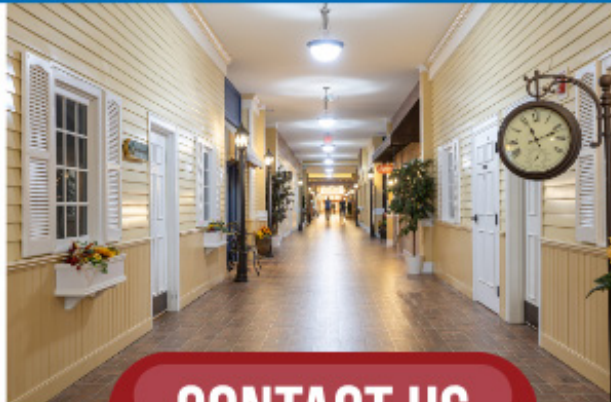
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