



Choosing the Right Assisted Living Community

If you're trying to decide whether assisted living is right for your loved one, ask yourself the following questions:

Does your loved one need more help than family and friends are able to provide? Are the activities of daily living becoming stressful or overwhelming? If family or in-home help is not able to bridge the gap, assisted living is an option.

Does your loved one feel lonely or isolated at home? Having an active social life is vital to health and happiness at all ages. Being alone much of the time is a recipe for depression in older adults. The social aspect of assisted living can be a huge benefit. Good facilities offer a range of social and recreational activities. And the community environment also gives the opportunity to make new friends.

Do you worry for your loved one's safety? Perhaps their mobility is limited, making it difficult to get out of bed by themselves, for example. Maybe they are afraid of what might happen if they fell and couldn't get up, or experience another problem and couldn't get help.

Are you and your loved one tired of maintaining their home? There are a lot of responsibilities that come with living in one's own home. Assisted living communities can provide a home-like atmosphere, without the work of cooking, cleaning, shopping for groceries and doing laundry.

Is transportation an issue? Perhaps your loved one is having trouble driving or can no longer drive. If

public transportation or another alternative isn't easy and convenient, they may be increasingly housebound or reliant on you for transportation to medical appointments, grocery shopping or to have their hair done. Assisted living communities offer transportation, so senior residents can get where they need to go without having to rely on friends and family.

People are more important than amenities

There is a huge variation among assisted living homes and communities. While this can make the process of choosing seem daunting, the plus side is that you have a good chance of finding a facility that is perfectly suited to your, and your loved one's preferences and needs.

As you start your search, try not to get overwhelmed by all the options. Remember, amenities matter much less than the residents and staff. It's the people that truly make any place, including an assisted living home.

You can tell a lot about a community by the people who live and work there. You want a facility with an active social atmosphere — where the residents are friendly and the staff is caring and warm. Make sure that, overall, you feel the facility is a place where your loved one will fit in and develop new relationships.

Visit a community at different times — during activities and meal times, for example — and seek feedback from residents and their families or via online reviews.

Ask about staffing patterns

To feel confident that your loved one will be well taken care of, it's important to ask questions about the staffing levels and workload at an assisted living home. For example:

- How many staff members are actually involved in residents' care?
- How many people are working at any one time?
- What are their duties during those times — do they have time to interact with residents?
- Are there registered nurses on site?
- How do staffing patterns differ at night?
- What happens when a staff member is sick or otherwise unable to be at work—is there enough coverage?

What to look for in the staff

- Do they have time to speak with you or does it feel rushed?
- Do they appear genuinely friendly and interested in you?
- Do they interact warmly with current residents? Or do they seem stressed or overwhelmed?
- How do they handle emergencies?

What to look for in the residents

- Do they appear happy?
- Do they enjoy interacting with one another?
- Do they seem like people you'd enjoy getting to know?
- Are there hobbies or groups on site that look interesting?

What to look for in the community

- Do the different areas seem clean and fresh?
- How often is housekeeping provided for resident rooms?
- Does the environment seem safe and secure? Are the bathrooms easily accessible and have grab bars? How do residents contact staff in an emergency?
- How is the food? Sample a meal and ask about menu options.

Other things to consider

The most important factor when choosing an

assisted living community is that it feels friendly, safe, and comfortable to you. The facility you'll be happiest with and your loved one will feel most at home and secure at won't necessarily be the most fancy or expensive. **The bottom line is that the right facility for you is the facility where you and your loved one feel most at home.**

Does it feel homey to you? This is a personal preference. Do you and your loved one prefer a smaller, cozier environment, or would you rather be in a larger place with more amenities? Is outside design, such as gardens or other greenery, important to you?

Does the community offer activities that your loved one might be interested in? Are there hobbies or activities on site, or transportation available to outside activities? Does the facility have amenities that are important to your loved one such as a library?

Is the food appealing to you? Do senior residents have the option of eating in their room if they would like to? What kinds of food are served? Is it nutritious and appetizing? Are there different food options available?

How are health problems handled? How do the staff handle both emergency and non-emergency problems? If you develop a medical condition, will you be able to remain there? At what point would you be required to move elsewhere for medical care?

Is the community in compliance with national and local licensing requirements? In the U.S., for example, each state has different standards, so you will want to check with your local regulatory agency to make sure that the facility is licensed and in compliance. You can also check the Better Business Bureau to see if any complaints have been lodged against the community.

Adapted from [HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org). Authors: Joanna Saisan, M.S.W., Melinda Smith, M.A., Doug Russell, M.S.W., and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.

About Evergreen Place

Evergreen Place is an historic senior assisted living home located in Manchester's North End. It is known for its small, close-knit family atmosphere, compassionate staff, exceptional quality of care and home-cooked food. Information at www.evergreenplace.org.