



**Senior Living Communities:**  
*What you need to know*



## A guide for seniors



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## Are you ready for senior living?

You're at the age where you could use a little help with certain things. Perhaps you could do with fewer daily responsibilities as well. Still, you're not sure you're ready to leave your home. In fact, just thinking about moving away from a place so familiar makes you emotional. You may even have a silent fear that any change will be a change for the worse.

This guide will help you get a realistic look at leaving home for a senior living community – what it entails and whether it's right for you.

Use the list of questions below to get a clearer sense of your need.

**YES**   **NO**

- Has it become a struggle to do yard and house work?
- Is your home no longer as neat and clean as it once was?
- Would regularly scheduled cleaning and maintenance be helpful?
- Do you find yourself struggling to make home repairs?
- Is driving becoming more difficult?
- Are you hesitant to drive at night?
- Would the availability of personal transportation make things easier?
- Has preparing three meals a day become too much to handle?
- Is it difficult to eat well-balanced and nutritious meals three times a day?
- Would you enjoy the opportunity to choose from an array of nutritious and appetizing meals, prepared for you?
- Do you have a hard time remembering recommendations from your doctor?
- Would you prefer someone else make your doctors' appointments for you?
- Do you often lose track of when bills should be paid?
- Do you often forget to take your medications?
- Would assistance with medication, and transportation to and from doctor visits be beneficial?
- Are you relying on others for help more frequently?
- Do you often feel bored or anxious?
- Do you often feel lonely?
- Would you feel happier if you had more friends of similar age with whom you share common interests?

If you answered yes to five or more of these questions, then a move to senior living might be a good choice for you.

## Is senior living affordable?


This worksheet will help you to accurately compare your current cost of living to the cost of living in a senior community.

CURRENT MONTHLY EXPENSES	CURRENT HOME	SENIOR LIVING
Mortgage or Rental Payment	\$	\$
Property Tax and Insurance	\$	<i>included</i>
Utilities <i>electricity, gas, water, sewer, trash removal</i>	\$	<i>included*</i>
Homeowner's or Renter's Insurance	\$	\$
Yard Care and Landscape Maintenance	\$	<i>included</i>
Maintenance and Home Repairs	\$	<i>included</i>
24-hour Emergency Call Service	\$	<i>included</i>
Transportation <i>insurance, gas, registration, repairs</i>	\$	<i>included</i>
Daily Meals and Refreshments Available 24 Hours a Day	\$	<i>included</i>
Entertainment and Leisure Activities <i>social, cultural, recreational events</i>	\$	<i>included</i>
Health Monitoring Program	\$	<i>included</i>
Exercise Programs	\$	<i>included</i>
Full-time Activities Staff	\$	<i>included</i>
Weekly Housekeeping and Linen Services	\$	<i>included</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$	\$


If the cost comparison worksheet shows that a senior living community may cost less, then you owe it to yourself to investigate further.



## Cost versus value



If the worksheet shows that a senior living community may cost more, consider its *value*. A better quality of life can improve your health and help you live longer. Is the quality of life and peace of mind that senior living offers worth a little more money?



## The cost of waiting

Consider some of the issues you may face if you continue to stay at home.

	SENIOR LIVING	WITHOUT SENIOR LIVING
<b>SOCIAL INTERACTION</b>	Offers daily activities to encourage social interaction with people who share similar interests.	Older people who live alone or with busy family members may feel isolated.
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Arranges transportation for social activities, errands and doctors' appointments.	Arranging transportation to necessary appointments may be challenging.
<b>NUTRITION</b>	Employs a full culinary staff to ensure delicious, restaurant-style meals with a variety of options.	Older people may rely on easily prepared meals rather than healthier alternatives.
<b>HOUSEKEEPING</b>	Offers housekeeping services, including linen and laundry services as requested.	Maintaining a home may become a greater burden.
<b>EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE</b>	Usually provides 24-hour assistance with an emergency call system located in each apartment.	Immediate help is often not available to older people who live alone.
<b>EXERCISE</b>	Offers exercise programs that maximize mobility, strength and overall health.	Older people may not have access to adequate exercise equipment and programs.
<b>MEDICATION</b> <i>(applies only to assisted living or supportive living residents with medication assistance services)</i>	Provides assistance with medications, making sure residents take what they're supposed to, and when.*	Without assistance, older people may take medications incorrectly.
<b>MAINTAINING INDEPENDENCE</b>	Offers assistance as needed and encourages residents to remain as independent as possible.	Older people may become totally dependent on their families.

\*Service provided where allowed by state regulations.





## Getting your family involved

Making the decision to move out of the “family” home is never easy. You may feel you’re letting down your children by giving up the place that holds so much of their history. You may worry your family members will take it personally if you choose to move into a community – that they will think you don’t trust them as caregivers.

Don’t let these fears stop you from doing what’s best for you. Your children will come around when they see your commitment to starting a new life. Don’t be surprised if they offer to help you research the various communities in your area.

## Approaching the topic

Consider the following tips before starting a discussion with family members:

- Be prepared. Being knowledgeable and informed will help you make your case. The more you know, the easier it will be to answer questions and overcome opposition.
- Look and feel your best. Choose a time when you're rested and feeling well.
- Make sure to listen to, and respond to, the concerns of all family members. It's essential that everyone feels they are part of the decision.

## How do you choose a senior living community?

We recommend using the criteria below to determine if a community is right for you.

### First Impressions

- Does the community seem clean, comfortable and welcoming?
- Were you greeted immediately upon arrival by a staff member?
- Are residents greeted by name from staff members?
- Does the community have a current license, if required by state law?
- Is the front lobby and entrance area clean and well-maintained?
- Is parking available for guests and visitors?

### Apartments and Accommodations

- Is there more than one apartment size and floor plan?
- Do apartments have their own doors that lock?
- Is there an emergency response system in each apartment?
- Is adequate storage and closet space available?
- May residents keep pets? If so, who is responsible for their care?
- Do apartments come equipped with a kitchen or kitchenette?

### Amenities and Comforts

- Is there an on-site beauty or barber shop?
- Is free transportation provided by the community, or is public transportation easily accessible?
- Are there attractive and comfortable common areas?
- Are residents' apartments regularly cleaned and maintained?
- Are laundry services available? If so, is there a charge?
- Are there outdoor areas available for socializing and for gatherings?

## How do you choose a senior living community? (continued)

### Activities and Social Outlets

- How many activities are offered each day? Does a trained staff member coordinate the activities?
- Is there a posted schedule of events? Are events in progress when you visit?
- Are there organized activities during the evenings and on weekends?
- Are religious services offered on the premises? Is transportation available?
- Are regularly scheduled exercise programs available?
- Is there a resident council, family council and/or family support group?

### Food and Dining

- Are nutritious, freshly prepared meals offered each day?
- Are meals served restaurant-style in a comfortable, clean dining room?
- Is there assigned seating at meals?
- Is consideration given for special diets?
- Are snacks, refreshments and drinks available to residents at all times?
- Are there menu options for each meal? How often does the menu change?

### Safety and Security

- Are smoke detectors and sprinkler systems in place for apartments and common areas?
- Is there an emergency response system available in each apartment?
- What type of night security system is in place? Are outside doors locked? If so, at what time?
- On average, how long does it take for a staff member to respond to a resident's request for help?
- Are there clear procedures in place in the event of a medical emergency?

### **Staff and Leadership**

- Are the staff members friendly and helpful?
- Were you introduced to the executive director or another member of management when you visited?
- What is the mission statement of the community and/or its parent company?
- Is adequate staffing present at night and on weekends?
- What is the resident-to-staff ratio on a typical day?

### **Friends and Neighbors**

- Is this an environment that promotes a positive and fulfilling lifestyle?
- Do residents appear happy and busy?
- Do staff and residents interact in a friendly and warm manner?
- Is the location convenient for family and friends to visit?
- What do current residents or family members at the community say about the experience of living there?

### **Medical and Personal Care**

- What health services are available on-site?
- May new residents keep their current physicians?
- What type of medication support is provided?
- Is there assistance for activities of daily living, such as bathing and dressing?
- Are additional services, such as hospice, home health or physical therapy, provided or allowed?

### **Contracts and Leases**

- Are there different costs for various levels of care?
- When may a contract be terminated? What are the transfer, discharge and refund policies?
- How often are fees increased?

## What items do you need in your new home?

As you decide what items to bring, consider this: in most cases, you'll be moving to a smaller space than the one you currently occupy. That means you'll need to "pare down" your personal possessions considerably. Paring down can be challenging. There are memories attached to everything you own. Don't be surprised if strong emotions come up during the process.

Use the list below to determine what personal belongings you need to bring with you to your new home.

**Furniture:**

- Single or full bed
- Chairs with arms
- Nightstand
- Lamps and lights
- Small table
- Television and stand
- Small refrigerator on stand (if desired)
- Small microwave on stand (if desired)

**Linens:**

- Comforter
- Mattress pad (flame retardant)
- Blanket
- Pillow
- Extra towels (if desired)
- Sheets (if not using sheets provided by the community)

**Bathroom:**

- Extendable shower hose (handheld, adjustable)
- Shower caddy
- Non-skid strips for shower floor
- Shower chair with back and adjustable legs (if needed)

**Personal Items:**

- Personal hygiene items: shampoo, soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, mouthwash, deodorant, lotions, tissues, shaving items, etc.
- Slippers, slip-on shoes
- Washable cardigan sweaters
- Robe and slippers
- Clothing and undergarments
- Outerwear

**Miscellaneous:**

- Clothes hamper or basket
- Wastebasket – must be metal or flame retardant
- Night-lights
- Clock with large numbers
- Calendar with large numbers
- Telephone (large numbers and audio assist device, if needed)
- Family pictures
- Paintings/pictures to hang
- Stationery and stamped envelopes
- Favorite snacks
- Extra blanket

## Conquering clutter

Here are some suggestions for easy and effective downsizing.

- **Copy**

It's the memories that matter, not the object. So make a copy. For instance, a single DVD of photographs will take up much less space than a big box of photos.

- **Donate**

Instead of selling items you don't want, consider donating them to your favorite charity. This comes with the added bonus of a tax deduction. Also, consider calling friends and family to see if they would like something special from your collection.

- **Focus**

Begin early and give yourself plenty of time. Take on one room at a time and stay with it until it's cleared. Otherwise, it's easy to become distracted and begin to shuffle items from one room to another.

- **Purge**

Will those old bank statements really be missed? Keep only the belongings and personal possessions you can't live without. If you haven't looked at it or used it in the past 12 to 24 months, chances are you won't need it.



## How to get help with the move

One trusted resource is the National Association of Senior Move Managers. NASMM can be a wonderful resource for older people in transition. This non-profit organization provides you with a complete list of professional move managers in your area who can help with things such as downsizing tips, packing and moving arrangements.

The senior living community you've chosen should also be able to recommend a move manager. Be sure to check references and fees before hiring an individual or company. Also, make sure the company is insured and bonded.

## What's the process for moving in?

Below, you'll find some tips to help make your move a success.

- 1.** Choose an apartment. Ask for room dimensions and a floor plan to get an accurate idea of what you can bring.
- 2.** Expect paperwork. It's required and will help establish your upcoming residency, as well as help determine your personal needs.
- 3.** Deposit. If there is a deposit required, find out if it is refundable prior to move-in. A deposit will reserve your apartment and provide first right of refusal up until your move-in date.
- 4.** Pick the date. Scheduling a date for move-in allows the community to be ready for you, and you to prepare for your move.
- 5.** Confirmation. It's a good idea to call your new home two to three days prior to your scheduled move-in with any last-minute questions you may have. It's also a helpful reminder for the community staff that you're coming.
- 6.** Time to go. You've done your homework and you're ready. Enjoy your new home!

## Here's to the good life

“I never knew how lonely and isolated I was 'til I moved out of my home.”

You'd be surprised how many new residents of a senior living community make this statement.

Community living gives you an instant social life. There are opportunities every day to participate in activities and interact with others.

Imagine – no more housekeeping, yard work or cooking big meals. And your transportation needs are provided for you. It's a chance to have “quality time” all the time. With community living, you don't lose independence – you gain freedom.

Being part of a senior living community also offers peace of mind – to you and your family. It's a great feeling knowing that the care you need is close by and always available.

We hope this guide has been of help to you. Please let us know if there is any other way we can serve you.

**ATRIA SENIOR LIVING**  
*[www.atriaseniorliving.com](http://www.atriaseniorliving.com)*