



# Aging-in-Place: Tips for Staying in Your Home

## EXTENSION

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### Aging in Place: Basic Info

The term aging in place means living in your home and community. Many older adults would rather stay at home than move to a facility. Aging in place can mean safety, comfort and independence. And, it costs less to live at home instead of a facility! So how can you successfully age in place?

### Aging in Place and You

#### Aging in Your Community

Community contact is a key part of aging in place. First, think about places you like to visit, such as shops and restaurants. Then, think about visiting these places with limited mobility. For example, if you cannot easily climb stairs, you may stop visiting the diner down the street with steps leading to the door. You could find another place that does not have stairs. You may also want to consider healthcare. Does your community have healthcare providers locally or nearby? These are just some community characteristics that need to be considered.

#### Aging may Change You

As you get older, your lifestyle and abilities may change. Some older adults have chronic health problems that can impact day-to-day functioning. This can make it harder to safely live at home. Consider internal and external factors.

#### Internal Factors

Internal factors are in you. These can include physical, cognitive and sensory capabilities. Aging may lead to a decline in physical activity. Activities of daily living might be more difficult. For example, moving, dressing, hygiene or even eating might take more effort. Consider:

- Balance and ability to walk steadily
- Muscle weakness
- Problems with vision and hearing
- Slower movement
- Fear of falling

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As we age, cognitive ability may decline. This means that memory, perception, language, thinking, reasoning and judgement may be impacted. It may be harder to perform activities of daily living. Practicing brain exercises, like puzzles, can help. As we age, we also may have declines in physical ability. For example, you can reduce risk and fear of falls with strength training and balance programs.

#### External Factors

External factors are outside of you. One important external factor is the home. Homes can be changed for safety and comfort. Consider:

- No-step entrances
- Wide doorways and hallways
- Flooring that lowers the risk of tripping/slipping and falling
- Furniture at appropriate height: easier to get up
- Accessible bathrooms
- Grab bars near the toilet
- Grab bars in the showers or bathtub area
- Handrails on stairs and steps
- Laundry on first floor
- New technology

Are you willing to try new technology? Some homes feature technology that can make aging in place easier. Some examples include:

- Fall sensors built into rooms
- Wrist-based fall sensor device
- Lighting and climate control
- Voice-activated home entertainment control
- Remote appliance monitoring
- Assistive robots

### I Want to Stay Home!

Whether you rent or you own, your home environment must be safe and supportive. Think beyond the basics. If you want to age in place, take steps now so you can safely stay in your own home. Consider the following activities of daily living.

- Personal care
- Health care: can you take your medicine?
- Daily chores

- Meals: are you eating balanced meals with people?
- Home maintenance
- Managing finances
- Keeping safe: will you wear an alert button?
- Leaving your home and getting around town

### When Aging in Place is No Longer an Option

The following factors may indicate that aging in place is no longer an option. This does not mean that you have to move to a facility. You may need to move in with a loved one; be sure to discuss this with your loved ones first!

- You struggle to care for your own needs.
- Your family and friends are no longer available to help you with daily tasks - either because of exhaustion or life events (e.g., work, new baby, etc.)
- Your home requires a lot of modifications to allow you to continue living there
- You can no longer afford in-home services (e.g., house-keeping, medical, etc.)
- Your instinct tells you it's time to move.

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