



ARE YOUR PARENTS AT RISK?

**5 things adult children MUST know to
keep aging parents (and themselves) safe,
well and happy!**

From a talk delivered by:

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LIVING OPTIONS

Many families are very confused about the various living options for their parents as they get older. What is best for them? If they do not stay at home, where can they go? There ARE various options – stay at home, move in with family, assisted living, and long term care. In this section, I will discuss the pros and cons of each of those options.

STAY AT HOME

This is the preferred option for the majority of our seniors. Seniors in North Vancouver, West Vancouver and Vancouver benefit from a wonderful quality of life. In general, the homes that they bought 50+ years ago (in many cases homes that they built themselves) are now worth many times more than they cost, even in just land value alone. Seniors have spent years making a home, they raised children there and feel a part of their local communities. To leave their own home would be seen as a huge loss.

However, sometimes the home becomes too big for the senior to manage alone and other services have to be brought in. The senior may need a gardener, or a housekeeper, or both. The senior may also need to make some adjustments in the layout of the house and perhaps install some equipment to assist them to live safely. Usually these things are quite easy to arrange.

The senior/s may also need to have some companionship or care. This will generally start very slowly, perhaps one visit a week when needs are still low. The caregiver can do light housework, grocery shopping, some meal preparation and, if needed, assist with personal care – bathing, hair washing and so on. It is best to start with some care when needs are relatively small, so that the senior can become accustomed to a caregiver taking charge of relatively unimportant issues. This gives the senior, and their family, a feeling of security and peace of mind.

The government will also provide some care for a senior, or a couple, living at home. When the needs are deemed high enough by the family doctor, the family can be referred to the government home support provider. North Shore Home Support (for residents of North Vancouver or West Vancouver) will provide a small amount of care. This is usually only provided when some personal care is required. This care does not include housekeeping, grocery shopping, companionship or transportation. That is always down to private care companies. However, it does assist with personal care needs. This care could be provided free of charge, or on a sliding scale determined by the means of the senior concerned.

As needs grow, the government will provide more and more care but this usually has to be supplemented by private care if the senior is intent on remaining at home. Private care can cover a few hours a week right through to 24-hour care if needed. Even high need care, such as palliative care, is possible at home, just ask for an assessment. Private care is quite costly and it can be difficult to persuade today's seniors to spend their hard-earned savings on their own care. However, the alternative, leaving home, is always a bad option if the senior really wishes to stay at home.



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Whilst you do have to pay for private home care, you CAN dictate the services and the quality of the care provided. Many seniors can afford this type of care. Others may decide that it is worth releasing some of the equity that they hold in their homes in order to afford to stay at home as long as possible. Professional advice should always be sought.

Retire-At-Home Services, North and West Vancouver, provide a wonderful leaflet "Getting Parents To Accept Caregiver Help". Please do not hesitate to ask us for it. Adult children find the suggestions given invaluable in getting their parents to consider how a caregiver could assist them.

MOVING IN WITH FAMILY

It is an ideal situation for a senior to move in with family who perhaps live nearby. Moving across the country to live with family is less ideal as the senior has to give up familiar surroundings and friends, but could still be the perfect solution for a senior who is becoming more and more isolated.

In this case, home care could be useful to bridge the gap when family members are out at work and unable to provide care and companionship during the day. Caregivers can also take seniors to medical appointments and also for other outings to break up the day. Sometimes a little companionship is all that is needed.

ASSISTED LIVING

Some seniors decide that the work of staying at home is too much for them and they prefer to move to a community with other seniors and where their needs – some housekeeping, cooking, laundry, entertainment - will be looked after. These communities provide their residence with a private apartment and generally provide two, if not three, meals per day. This allows seniors their independence but also provides them with support.

In North Vancouver and West Vancouver you can find these residences by searching Assisted Living. You should find – Amica, Sunrise in Lynn Valley, Chartwell, Hollyburn House, The Westerleigh, The Summerhill, Cedar Springs, amongst others.

These residences are reasonably costly and the worry is that, once your private home has been sold, you may not be able to change your mind about where you want to live. Also, some of these residences will not accept new residents who have too many health problems. If health problems present when residing in an assisted living, you may need to consider moving to another facility that provides more hands-on care. Some of these residences DO have long term care wings so the transition would not be so traumatic for the senior.

Retire-At-Home Services, North Vancouver and West Vancouver, do provide services to clients living in assisted living residences. Sometimes the client just needs a little care to retain their independence and we can provide that for them. This usually includes help with bathing and personal care, supervising medications and perhaps a little one-to-one companionship, assisting with medical visits and accompanying on outings.

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LONG TERM CARE

Long term care is an option for seniors whose care needs are reasonably high and who therefore cannot remain at home without a lot of help, or do not qualify for assisted living due to care needs.

The government-run facilities (In North Vancouver and West Vancouver - Evergreen House, Capilano Care Centre, Inglewood Care Centre, Kiwanis Care Centre, to name a few) are accessed through the health system. The family doctor can advise on how to be assessed for admittance to one of these homes. Often admittance follows hospitalization.

Currently the government requires residents of government-managed long term care facilities to pay 80% of their current income toward the cost of care (to a current maximum of \$3,500 per month). This payment does NOT cover the cost of extras such as medications, physiotherapy, haircuts, podiatry, medical equipment, personal care items, and so on.

There are also private long term care facilities (In North Vancouver and West Vancouver – Sunrise in Lynn Valley, Lynn Valley Care Centre, Hollyburn House, Amica, The Westerleigh, Chartwell, to name a few) which provide private long-term care. Current costs for this are \$8,000 upwards per month, very much dependent upon the level of care required.

Many families with seniors in long term care also hire private companions for their family members. These companions build a trusting relationship with the senior, assist with outings if possible, provide friendship, advocate on behalf of the patient and report back to the families on how their family member is faring. Families feel more peace of mind knowing that their senior is receiving regular visits from a caring individual when they cannot be there themselves.

Remember also that some patients in long-term care can also be removed from official care to be cared for at home by experienced, qualified caregivers, depending upon the level of care required. Some families do choose to investigate this possibility and Retire-At-Home Services, North Vancouver and West Vancouver are happy to provide a free in-home assessment.

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COMMUNITY SUPPORT AVAILABLE

FAMILY AND FRIENDS

When worrying about their seniors, families often forget that they can always ask family and friends to support them. Family members can each be assigned days to visit and tasks to perform, remember to keep the division of labour as equitable as possible! Also, friends and neighbours are very often happy to help out on a short term or even a long term basis. Just ask and see what they say!

SENIOR CENTRES AND GROUPS

There are some wonderful Senior Centres in North Vancouver and West Vancouver. Contact details are below. Please do call and ask for more information.

Capilano CSS Seniors' Hub, North Vancouver	604-988-7115
John Braithwaite Community Centre, North Vancouver	604-982-8300
Parkgate Seniors' Centre, North Vancouver	604-983-6350
Silver Harbour Seniors' Centre, North Vancouver	604-980-2474
West Vancouver Seniors' Centre, West Vancouver	604-925-7280

GOVERNMENT HOME CARE

North Shore Home Support is a provider of in-home care to seniors. You must be referred by your doctor and the service is means tested and restricted to essential needs.

BETTER AT HOME

Better At Home provides some free service for seniors in need. They will assist with driving to appointments, some grocery shopping, housekeeping and gardening. As the service is dependent principally upon volunteers, there are limits on how much assistance can be provided. However, this is a great place for low-income seniors to turn for help.

Telephone: - 604-985-7138 and ask to speak with Josh Cook.

BETTER MEALS/SALVATION ARMY/MEALS ON WHEELS

Pre-prepared food for seniors can be provided by the following organizations: -

Better Meals 604-299-1877 (frozen meals delivered)

The Salvation Army 604-988-6040 (frozen meals delivered)

Meals-On-Wheels 604-922-3414 (hot meals delivered)

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PRIVATE HOME CARE

Whilst there are a lot of private home care providers on the North Shore and in Vancouver, you could take no better step than to contact us at Retire-At-Home Services, 604-988-1628. We are proud to offer quality, compassionate in-home care and our staff are second to none!

LIFELINE

Philips Lifeline is a medical alert pendant that can, and does, save seniors' lives.

North Shore Lifeline 604-873-5266

NORTH SHORE COMMUNITY SUPPORT (for seniors and for family caregivers)

FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

There are so many more resources available to seniors in North Vancouver and West Vancouver. The very best place to go with any questions is the Seniors' One-Stop, run from the North Shore Community Resources office at 201-935 Marine Drive (inside Capilano Mall, 2nd Floor), North Vancouver V7P 1S3. Their telephone number is 604-983-3303 and the lines are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 3pm.

The North Shore Community Support office provide a complete list of resources for family caregivers, as well as regular family caregiver support groups.

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HOME SAFETY

It is highly recommended that you get an expert to check around the senior's home in order to make recommendations as to how the senior can minimize the risks of falls and other accidents. These services can be provided by occupational therapists, Self Care and Davies Pharmacy (both in North Vancouver) and also by our nurse as part of our client on-boarding process.

We also produce a home safety checklist. Please do contact us if you would like a copy.

BC SENIORS' HOME RENOVATION TAX CREDIT

You can claim if you are a BC resident AND a senior, or a family member living with a senior.

The maximum amount of the credit is \$1,000 per tax year and it is calculated as 10% of the qualifying renovation expense (maximum \$10,000 in expenses) for modifications to your principal residence. It is a REFUNDABLE tax credit, so if the credit is higher than the taxes you owe, you will receive the refund.

Canada Revenue Agency 1-800-959-8281

HOME ADAPTATIONS FOR INDEPENDENCE (HAFI)

BC Housing's HAFI program helps people with disabilities and low-income BC seniors to make home modifications that will allow them to continue living at home. Someone in the household must have a permanent disability or loss of ability that makes it difficult to perform day to day activities.

The total household income and assets must be below a certain limit. BC Housing can tell you more about this.

Homeowners, and landlords with eligible tenants can apply for financial assistance of up to \$20,000 for improvements that make their home more accessible and safe. Assistance is in the form of a grant or a forgivable loan.

BC Housing 604-646-7055

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DEMENTIA CARE AND ALZHEIMER CARE

Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease cause a loss of cognitive function resulting from a variety of diseases. These diseases damage the memory, thinking and reasoning parts of the brain, but emotions remain intact.

"Dementia changes relationships – it doesn't have to end them" Nicole Scheidl, CEO, Fit Minds Inc.

SOME IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT DEMENTIA

- Affects 1 in 11 Canadians over 65
- Refers to a number of different diseases, there are many types of dementia
- Affects the brain and involves a progressive loss of cognitive function
- Usually affects seniors, but younger people may also be affected
- Is not a normal part of the aging process
- Almost all dementia sufferers are cared for by one or more family caregivers. According to Mount Sinai Hospital, those caregivers" are at twice the risk of the general population for depression and physical health problems."

WARNING SIGNS

The senior demonstrates some of the signs listed below.

- behaves uncharacteristically
- becomes more anxious, withdrawn, or agitated
- starts to forget appointments and other events
- becomes more disorganised and generally unable to deal with everyday life
- starts to have problems communicating
- has impaired judgement
- fails to recognise familiar people and places

WHAT TO DO WHEN A LOVED ONE IS DIAGNOSED WITH ANY FORM OF DEMENTIA

Caring for a loved one with dementia is a very difficult task but it can also be incredibly rewarding. Sometimes illness opens the path for greater closeness between family members. However, you do need to be aware of your own emotions, get informed about the subject as soon as you can, explore the options available to you as far as care and assistance is concerned and, above all, take very good care of yourself. Self care is key for family caregivers.

USEFUL TIPS FOR APPROACHING SOMEONE WITH DEMENTIA

- Smile!
- Approach from the front

- Remain at eye level, do not hover over them
- Speak slowly and simply
- Be patient and allow time
- Focus on the person, not on the task. Focus especially on what they CAN do.
- Know when to walk away
- Use positive language, i.e. “Let’s go for a walk!” rather than “Do you think you would like to go for a walk?”
- If you INSIST on something, they are likely to RESIST

PREVENTION / MAINTENANCE

Dementia and Alzheimer’s Disease cannot be cured, but there are a variety of ways to hold it at bay and, once diagnosed, to try and hinder its progression. In particular, there are the five pillars of health, each of which can be worked on to try to keep the individual as healthy as possible. These are: -

- Nutrition – eat fresh, healthy foods. Minimise fast food and junk foods.
- Socialization – encourage the maintenance of friendships, attendance at clubs and social groups, family gatherings and so forth
- Mental Stimulation – keeping the mind stimulated with puzzles, jigsaws, reading, discussion
- Spirituality – any activity or thoughts that connect with beliefs, not necessarily formal religion
- Physical Activity – any form of physical activity should be encouraged as much as possible, if safe to do so.

Working on all five areas will make a very positive difference in the quality of life of any senior.

FIT MINDS

Retire-At-Home Services have teamed up with Fit Minds, an Ontario-based company, who have developed an innovative brain exercise program called Fit Minds. Fit Minds uses Cognitive Stimulation Therapy and is designed specifically for seniors dealing with dementia, or who are concerned to keep their brains as active as possible for as long as possible. The program is offered on a one-on-one basis where our trained caregiver works directly with a client. Each client has their own customized program which works on every part of their brain, with some areas of functioning receiving more support than others, depending upon their needs.

The exercises cover 5 areas of cognition

- Language and Music
- Visual/Spatial Orientation
- Computation
- Critical Thinking



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- Memory

It has been shown that regular sessions delay the onset of dementia or significantly slow its' progress. Another HUGE benefit of the program is that it encourages focused interaction between trained caregiver and client. A trusting relationship is built which gives the senior the confidence to really step out and challenge themselves to show what they can do. Of course, the whole program is delivered with encouragement, support and lots of humor, and is generally a very enjoyable experience for all concerned.

For more information about the Fit Minds program North Vancouver, West Vancouver and Vancouver, please feel free to call our office on 604-998-1628.

More information about Fit Minds in general can be found on www.fitminds.ca

RESOURCES

MEDICALERT provide a variety of ID bracelets which tell first responders what they need to know about a person if they are found wandering, or ill in any way. This is ideal for people with dementia who could start to wander. Medicalert is a Canadian charity who have been providing this service for over 50 years. Contact Medicalert on 1-855-724-2499. Quote offer code CDPRAH15N to receive an extra discount on advertised rates.

ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF BC have a variety of local programs to support Alzheimer sufferers and their caregivers. Their informative courses are highly recommended for families to learn about the progression of the disease and to receive the support they will need. Contact them on 604-984-8348.

NORTH SHORE CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM call 604-982-3320

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THE BENEFITS OF GOOD CARE AND COMPANIONSHIP

It is our experience, as home care providers, that seniors who are in decline can benefit HUGELY from good companionship, and personal care if needed. Simply the fact that they see another human being once, twice, three times a week or every day for that matter, produces a noticeable uplift in spirits and wellbeing. This is true even for seniors who are not actually in decline but who do not get a lot of company.

HOW TO GET YOUR PARENTS TO ACCEPT CAREGIVER HELP

For many families, the difficulty lies in persuading their parents that help is needed, or would be beneficial. Today's seniors are a hardy bunch who lived through some tough times and the idea of getting any form of help is absolutely abhorrent to them! So, Retire-At-Home Services have come up with a checklist of ideas for how you could approach your senior with the suggestion of receiving care.

- **Introduce the idea slowly**

Start to mention your feeling that a little bit of extra care or companionship may be beneficial to them. Investigate the possibility of the family visiting a little more, or of asking neighbours to pop in for a while. This would be wonderful for the senior and would prepare them to receive more care as and when it becomes necessary.

- **Offer a trial period**

Let your parents know that nothing is FOREVER. Retire-At-Home Services have no contracts at all so service can be started and cancelled at any time (there is a 24-hour notice period of cancellation and that is ALL! The only exception is for Live In Care, other conditions do apply there). If a caregiver is not liked, another caregiver can be appointed. If the days of the shift do not work, they can be changed. In this way the senior feels that they are not absolutely committed to anything. Once care starts most seniors really do see the benefit in continuing the service.

- **Present the idea as being for YOUR benefit**

The greatest fear of most of our seniors is that they will "be a burden" to their family. Therefore, if you present care as being something that would help YOU out, then seniors are much more likely to accept it. Something that they would not do for themselves, they WOULD do for their family. So presenting the situation as "care would give ME more peace of mind" is one way to counter their reluctance

- **Start with general chores, not "hands on" work**

I always recommend that families start with perhaps a little LESS care than they really need. A slow start allows a senior to build trust with the caregiver and to see the benefits of receiving care, before they are too committed. In the same way, caregivers should start

with general chores, companionship, housework, outings and so on, before doing any form of personal care unless, of course, assistance with personal care is absolutely necessary.

- **Ask the doctor to suggest a little extra care**

Seniors very often disregard the views of their families but they are always attentive to the words of their doctor. If the doctor could suggest that extra care would be beneficial – keep them at home safely, provide companionship, relieve the stress on the family caregiver and so on – the senior is much more likely to consider the idea.

- **Be aware of reaction to the cost of services**

Today's seniors have passed through times of economic crisis and most have had to work very hard for any money that they now have. The idea of spending money on themselves and especially on caring for themselves, is not a welcome idea to them. Many think that care should be provided by the government and certainly do not wish to pay extra for it. Also, each dollar seems much more valuable to a senior than it does to the younger generation. You may need to spend some time explaining this to your parents and reassuring them about the value of the care received.

WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR IN A HOME CARE COMPANY?

We are often asked about how families can distinguish between one company and another. There are so many companies, small and large, in the home care market. Here are a few things to look out for:-

- The company responds quickly and personally to your first enquiry
- The company listens carefully to your needs and offers a free assessment visit
- The company communicates with the family on an ongoing basis. You feel that you can contact the company at any time and you are not just another number to them
- Good consistency with caregivers. Obviously, caregivers are human beings and are subject to getting sick, moving away, changing jobs and so forth. However, a company who treat their caregivers well have a MUCH higher chance of keeping their staff for the long term. Which ties in with the following point
- Happy caregivers. This is hard to tell at an initial interview with the company but a good indicator of how happy the caregivers will be is the COST of service. Be very, very careful of companies at the lower end of the cost scale. It is highly likely that they are paying their caregivers less than other companies, not a good way to retain quality staff.
- Going the extra mile. Do you feel that this company would go the extra mile for your family?
- Range of services. Does the company offer everything from companionship and personal care through to nursing services if required?
- Is the care “nurse managed”? Even if a nurse is not required, it is good to know that the care is overseen by a nurse regularly.



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TESTIMONIALS

Every company should be able to produce lots of customer testimonials. I would like to share two here that have been received by Retire-At-Home Services, North and West Vancouver. Both of these refer to live-in care clients but I am including them here as they express how well we cover the needs mentioned above.

“I look after the affairs of a friend, neighbor and colleague whom I’ll call B. She is single, in her late 70’s, and with fairly advanced dementia.

Her psychiatric physician has insisted for nearly three years now that B have 24-hour care. It is her wish that she remain in her house as long as possible. So, Retire-At-Home provide caregivers and these take 24 hours shifts at the house.

I am delighted with the arrangement that Fiona Kelly of Retire-At-Home is providing. These mature, experienced companions are devoted to B’s care. There is a personal bond with each of them, both ways; they are B’s family. She has the independence and respect she wished for, makes many of her own decisions, and lives a quiet life with dignity.

I have the highest regards for the care B is getting, and I offer this testimonial with no hesitation”

David W, Vancouver

“I have an elderly aunt who lives in North Vancouver and I live in White Rock, so the daily challenges of trying to take care of her are quite difficult.

When I was advised by her doctor that she required firstly 12 hour overnight care I didn’t know where to begin to put this together in a short time frame. Thank goodness someone recommended Retire-At-Home Services to me.

From the first few minutes of speaking with Fiona I felt a huge weight lifted from my shoulders, her efficient and extremely compassionate responses were wonderful. After several weeks, when we had to move to longer care hours, all it took was a call to Fiona and again it was dealt with very promptly.

I cannot thank Fiona and her very caring group of care workers enough for all they do to make my aunt’s life more comfortable. Nothing is too much trouble and, in fact, they have gone above and beyond what I was expecting. The regular updates on her care and requirements that are conveyed to me makes me secure in the knowledge that she has someone with her at all times taking care of her needs.

I would highly recommend Retire-At-Home Services.”

Tina H, White Rock

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